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MEMOIRS OF IR WEMYSS REID

EDITED BY STUART J. REID

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Milson A. Rhodes,

from his Kinsman

& friend,

Stuart J. Reid.

Nov: 4th 1905.

East-Grinstead -

Sussex.

MEMOIRS OF

SIR WEMYSS REID

1842-1885

Wemyss Reid

PHOTO: RUSSELL & SONS,
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H E D

MEMOIRS OF SIR WEMYSS REID

1842–1885

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

STUART J. REID

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TO

Lady Reid,

THE DEVOTED WIFE OF

MY BROTHER,

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

THE sense of personal loss occasioned by my brother's death is still so keen and vivid that if I am to write at all about him—and my duty in that respect is clear—it must be out of the fulness of my heart. My earliest recollections of him begin when I was a child and he was a bright, self-reliant lad in the home at Newcastle, the characteristics of which are with artless realism described in the opening pages of this book. It is the simple truth to say that we grew up in an atmosphere of love and duty. Our father was a man of studious habit, passing rich in the possession of a library of dry works on theology which his children never read, and among which they searched in vain for the fairy books and stories, or even the poetry, dear to the youthful heart. He was a faithful, rather than a gifted preacher, and I have always thought that his power—it was real and far-reaching—lay in his modest, unselfish life, and in that unfailing sympathy which kept him on a perpetual round of visits to the sick and sorrowful, year in, year out. He had a quiet sense of humour, and was never so happy as when he could steal a day off from the insistent claims of pastoral work for a ramble in the country with his boys.

Always a public-spirited man, and keenly interested in political affairs, he talked to us freely about the events of the time, and made us feel that the little affairs of our own home and immediate environment could never be seen in their true perspective until they were set against the larger life of the town, and, in a sense, of the nation. When any great event occurred he used to tell us all about it; when any great man died, if we did not know the significance of his life and the loss it meant to the country, it was not his fault. He was a quiet, rather reserved man, terribly in earnest, we thought, and with a touch of sternness about him which vanished in later life. He mellowed with the passing years, and long before old age crept quietly upon him the prevailing note of his character was charity. He had been in early life associated to some extent with the Press, and later had written one or two books, so that ink was in my brother's blood.

Our mother was almost his opposite in character. She was quick, almost imperious in temper, vivacious and witty of speech, full of sense and sensibility, in revolt—I see it now—against the narrow conditions of her lot, and yet bravely determined to do her best, not merely for her husband and children, but for the rather austere little community in which she was always a central figure. There was a charm about her to which all sorts and sizes of people surrendered at discretion, and she loved books more modern and more mundane than the dingy volumes on my father's shelves. She

had received, what was more rare then than now, a liberal education, and, besides modern languages, had at least a moderate acquaintance with the classics. She held herself gallantly in the dim, half-educated society of her husband's chapel, but reserved her friendships—sometimes with a touch of wilfulness—for those who represented whatever there was of sweetness and light in the wider society of the town. In one respect she was absolutely in harmony with my father, and that was in her sympathy with the poor and in quiet, unparaded determination to hold out a helping hand to all that sought it. She had imagination, and she sent it on errands of good-will. I think my brother inherited from her his alertness of mind and not a little of his quickness of apprehension.

I can remember him coming back from Bruce's school all aglow with his prizes, and I can recall, as if it were but yesterday, his audacious speeches, and the new books with which, as soon as he earned a shilling, he began to leaven the dull old library, much to the delectation of the other children. I can recall a rough cartoon in one of the local journals which was greeted with huge merriment in the family circle, because it represented Tom as "Ye Press of Newcastle"—a mere boy in a short jacket perched on a stool, scribbling for dear life at the foot of a platform on which some local orator was denouncing the tyranny of the existing Government. He must then have been about seventeen, certainly not

more, and he was even at that time somewhat of a youthful prodigy. Then he developed a passion for the collection of autographs, and used to write the most alluring letters to celebrities, and astound my modest father by the replies—they were invariably written as to a man of mature life and public importance—which he had elicited from eminent people in politics and the world of letters. He, a mere youth, invited a well-known Arctic explorer to Newcastle to lecture on his perils in the frozen North, and my father bought him his first hat to go to the railway station to meet the gallant sailor, who brought his pathetic relics of Franklin to our house, where he stayed as guest. The great man's chagrin when he found that a lad scarcely out of short jackets had invited him to Newcastle vanished in the genial firelight, and in the subsequent reception of the good townsfolk. Then my brother conceived the ambitious scheme of the West End Literary Institute, and by dint of energetic and persistent begging carried the project out, and with a high hand.

Suddenly, when he was still a young reporter, a great calamity befell the locality. The Hartley Colliery catastrophe plunged all Tyneside in gloom. He was the youngest reporter on the local Press, but his account of the long-drawn agony of that terrible time, when two hundred brave fellows lost their lives, was the most graphic. It brought him local renown. It was published as a shilling pamphlet, after it had done duty in the

Newcastle Journal, and to his credit he gave, though as poor as a church mouse, the whole of the proceeds—a sum of £40, I think—to the Relief Fund. It was a characteristic act which was not belied by the subsequent generosity of his life. All too soon—for he brought as a young reporter a breezy, new atmosphere into the family circle—he went to Preston, on the principle of promotion by merit. Then Leeds claimed him, and next he settled in London, in the short-lived happiness of his early married life, returning to Yorkshire—this time as chief of the paper he had served so well. During his career as editor of the *Leeds Mercury* I saw comparatively little of him. We were both busy, though in different ways; but we kept up, then and always, a brisk correspondence, and his letters, all of them brimful of public interest and family affection, are before me now. The world is a different place to me now, but "memory is a fountain of perpetual youth," and nothing can rob me of its sweetness.

There is scarcely an incident recorded in these pages which he did not tell me at the time in familiar talk. There is much, also, that he has not set down here, all of it honourable to himself, which I could recount about those early days in Newcastle, and to a certain extent also in Leeds, where I was again and again his guest; but, as he has chosen to be silent, it is not for me to speak. Oddly enough, I never in my life heard him deliver a political speech, nor do I think he excelled in that direction. But he was admirable as a lecturer on literary

subjects, and I have seen him again and again hold a large audience spellbound when his subject was Charlotte or Emily Brontë, Mrs. Carlyle, the Inner Working of an English Newspaper, the Character of General Gordon, or some other theme which appealed to him. He spoke rapidly and clearly, and between the years 1882 and 1886 gave his services without stint in this direction to the people of Leeds, Bradford, and other of the Yorkshire towns. The manuscripts of these lectures are before me as I write ; they are all in his own hand, and they must have taken from an hour to an hour and a half in delivery. Yet one of the most important of them—it runs to between sixty and seventy closely written manuscript pages, and bears no marks of haste—was, as a note in his own hand at the outset shows, begun one day and finished the next—a proof, if any were needed, of his rapidity in work. He made many enthusiastic friends amongst the shrewd working people of the North by these deliverances.

The last twenty years of my brother's life are outside the present narrative. Two of them were spent in Leeds in ever-widening newspaper work, and the remaining eighteen in London, under circumstances he has himself described in another volume, which, for political reasons, is for the present withheld. It will appear eventually, and personally I feel no doubt whatever that it will take its place, quite apart from its self-revelation, as one of the most important and authentic records, in the political sense, of the later decades of

Queen Victoria's reign. My brother's knowledge of the secret history of the Liberal party in the memorable days when Mr. Gladstone was fighting his historic battle for Home Rule, and during the subsequent Premiership of Lord Rosebery, was exceptional. He was the trusted friend of both statesmen, and probably no other journalist was so absolutely in the confidence of the leaders of the Liberal party—a circumstance which was due quite as much to his character as to his capacity. It is not my intention to anticipate the story, as he himself tells it, either of the "Hawarden Kite" or the Home Rule split, much less to disclose his opinions—they are emphatic and deliberate—of the men who made mischief at that crisis. I leave also untouched the plain, unvarnished account he gives, on unimpeachable authority, of a subsequent and not less discreditable phase in the annals of the Liberal party. There are reasons, obvious to everyone who gives the matter a moment's thought, that render it inadvisable in the interests of the political cause with which my brother all his life was identified, and for which he suffered more than is commonly known, to yield to the very natural temptation to throw reticence to the winds.

To one point only will I permit myself to make brief but significant allusion, for I cannot allow this book to go forth to the world with the knowledge that the publication of the companion volume is—through force of circumstances—for the present postponed, without at least

a passing reference to what in the authoritative biography of Mr. Gladstone is called the "barren controversy" which arose in 1892, as to whether the present Duke of Devonshire, in 1880, tried to form a Government. That controversy was assuredly "barren" to my brother in everything but the testimony of a good conscience. He was assailed by almost the whole Press of the country for the part which he played in it, and not least mercilessly by journalists of his own party. As he said to me himself at the time, "If I had been Mr. Parnell, fresh from the revelations of the Divorce Court, I could not have been treated with greater contumely." If there was one thing on the possession of which he prided himself in life more than another, it was loyalty, and seldom was political loyalty subjected to a more cruel strain. He held his peace with all the materials for his own vindication in his hand, rather than embarrass Mr. Gladstone at a great political crisis.

The letters on which he based his statements are in existence. I wished to print them, without note or comment of mine, in an Appendix to the present volume, but permission has been withheld. They cannot remain for ever in ambush, and when they are published, with my brother's full and magnanimous comments, it will be apparent to all the world how greatly he was misjudged. It is enough for the present to say that Mr. Gladstone himself admitted in a note under his own hand that the interpretation which my brother put upon the facts submitted to him *absolutely and entirely*

justified the course which he took in that controversy. Mr. Gladstone, as Mr. Morley somewhat drily states in his biography, "reckoned on a proper stoicism in the victims of public necessity," and I suppose my brother was regarded as thin-skinned, but a man may be forgiven a measure of sensitiveness when his honour is impeached.

He always used to speak with gratitude of the action of Lord Russell of Killowen at that period. He heard the gossip of the clubs, and was not content, like the majority of men, either to believe it or to dismiss the matter with a shrug of the shoulders. He sought my brother out at his own house, heard the whole story from his own lips—through an informal but stringent process of cross-examination—drew his own conclusions, and did more than anyone else to turn the tide of misrepresentation. Lord Russell never rested until Wemyss Reid was elected an honorary member of the Eighty Club, a distinction shared by only two or three persons, and one which did not a little to bring about, in the Liberal party at least, a quick reversal of public opinion. The chivalrous action of Lord Russell was all the more creditable as the two men at the time were only slightly acquainted. Other honours came to my brother within the next two years. The University of St. Andrews in 1893 conferred upon him the degree of LL.D., and in the following year he was knighted "for services to Letters and Politics."

It is a pleasure to hark back to the literary interests which grew around the later years of my brother in London. He went thither in

1887 to take control of the business of Messrs. Cassell & Company—a position of wide influence and hard work which he retained to the last day of his life. He used to tell me that he detested the City and the irksomeness of keeping office hours, but he stuck manfully to his post, and his presence at the desk there lent a lustre even to the traditions of a great publishing house. I betray no confidences when I say that at first he found his new duties somewhat uncongenial. He had won his spurs as a journalist, he was fond of the cut and thrust of party politics, he missed the rush of public life, and he felt that perhaps he had been ill-advised in quitting the editorial saddle. But this feeling of depression quickly wore off when he set himself, with characteristic energy, to master the details of his new work, though to the last he often cast longing glances backwards to the years in which he inspired the policy of a great daily newspaper. Before he left Leeds—and here I may say that he did not leave without substantial proof of the esteem in which he was held—he accepted two literary commissions, either of which would have satisfied most men and absorbed all their energies for a term of years.

One was the preparation of an authoritative biography of Mr. Forster, the other a similar work—less political and more literary—on the first Lord Houghton. He was, of course, in a position to speak from close personal knowledge of both men, and in each case all their private letters and papers were placed at his discretion. He found relief from the

prosaic details of a business career in these congenial tasks, if such a term is applicable to what in reality were labours of love. Both were big books, and the marvel is how, with all that he had in hand at the time, he contrived to write them. But the passion for work was the zest of his life, and it was never turned to more admirable account than in these labours. "The Life of the Right Hon. W. E. Forster" was published in 1888, and "The Life, Letters, and Friendships of Lord Houghton" in 1890, and both met with a reception which it is hardly within my province to describe. It is enough to say that they widened his reputation, added materially to his influence, and, best of all, brought him many new and powerful friends.

Almost before he had finished writing the second of these books, at the instance of Mr. Bryce (with whom his relations were always most close and cordial) and other well-known men in the Liberal party, he, in conjunction with Sir John Brunner, founded the *Speaker*, a weekly journal which was started on similar lines to the *Spectator*, but devoted to the advocacy of the Home Rule cause, and broadly of the policy of Mr. Gladstone. The first number was published on January 4th, 1890, and from that time until October, 1899, he alone was responsible for its editorial control. He gathered around him a brilliant staff of contributors; he used laughingly to say that he was over-weighted by them, and, if I may venture a criticism, he gave them too free a hand. Contemporary politics were discussed amongst others by Mr. Morley,

Mr. Bryce, Mr. J. A. Spender, and Mr. Herbert Paul. Literary criticism, economic questions, and other phases of public affairs, were handled by Sir Alfred Lyall, Mr. Birrell, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Mr. James Payn, Mr. Henry James, Mr. J. M. Barrie, Mr. Quiller-Couch, Mr. Sidney Webb, Mr. L. F. Austin, Mr. A. B. Walkley, and a score of young writers ; whilst men like the late Lord Acton and Principal Fairbairn, and occasionally Mr. Gladstone himself, lent further distinction to its pages. No one worked harder in those days for the *Speaker* than my brother's ever loyal assistant in its direction, Mr. Barry O'Brien, whose intimate knowledge of the trend in Irish politics was invaluable. I shall not anticipate by any comments of my own the vivid and always genial pen-and-ink pictures which are given of the chief members of the *Speaker* staff in that part of the Memoirs which yet remains unprinted.

I prefer to fall back in this connection on a little bit of reminiscence, printed in one of the daily papers on the morrow of my brother's death. It was written by Mr. L. F. Austin, who alas! has so quickly followed him to the grave. "Some months ago, feeling himself under sentence of death, Sir Wemyss Reid applied his leisure to the task of completing his Memoirs. 'Here is a chapter that may interest you,' he said to me one day, producing a roll of manuscript. It did interest me very much, and when it comes to be published it will be read with no little emotion by the men who formed the regular staff of the *Speaker* under Sir Wemyss Reid's editorship. He

deals with us all in turn in a spirit of the kindliest remembrance and simple goodwill; and as I read those pages, I felt they were his farewell to some of the men who have good reason to think of him as the staunchest of friends." I was in very close association with my brother during the whole of the ten years in which he retained control of the *Speaker*, and took my full share of the work. They were for him years of strenuous and unremitting toil, but he used to say that there were few greater rewards for a man of his temperament than to be in the thick of the political movement, and to be in the front rank of the fighters. He adopted as his motto in life "Onwards"—the watchword of his old school at Newcastle, emblazoned on the back of the prizes which he took in far-off days; and from first to last he lived up to it. Brusque he sometimes was, decisive always; perhaps he was too easily ruffled in little affairs, but he was magnanimous to the point of self-sacrifice in great. After quitting, under circumstances entirely honourable to himself, the editorial chair of the *Speaker*, my brother, who for years previously had been an occasional contributor to the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*, contributed regularly to that review a political survey of the month. Some of his best work was put into these articles, and the last of them was written under great physical stress, and appeared almost simultaneously with the announcement of his death. It was the last task to which he put his hand, and the wish of his life was granted: he died in harness.

It is not too much to say that neither his interest nor his influence in political affairs suffered the least abatement in the six closing years of his life, which bridged the distance between his relinquishment of the *Speaker* and the hour when he finally laid down his pen. The withheld portion of this Autobiography makes that abundantly clear, for, as in a mirror, it reflects the secret history of the Liberal party. His relations with Lord Rosebery, both during and after that statesman's brilliant but difficult Administration, were singularly intimate and cordial—a circumstance which invests with peculiar interest the final chapters which he wrote. They throw a dry light on the political intrigues which occurred after Mr. Gladstone's retirement; they reveal the difficulties—both open and unsuspected—which beset his successor. Lord Rosebery has written me a letter, and I have his permission to quote from it:—"I can only dwell on the sterling notes of courage and friendship. As to the first, he had taken part in many controversies, which it is now unnecessary to revive, and borne himself gallantly in them. But before his life ended he was to display a rarer quality. In September, 1903, he wrote to me that he could only count on a few weeks longer of life—that he was condemned by all doctors. . . . He partially recovered from that attack, though from that day he was doomed to speedy death. I saw him in February for the last time, not long before the end. He told me, as he always did, that he did not feel amiss, but that

his doctors all unanimously condemned him to a short shrift; that his friend Sir Frederick Treves was putting him under a new treatment, from which he hoped to derive some benefit; but that, whatever happened, he should go on writing as if nothing were wrong until the end came. That did not long tarry. In the evening of Thursday, February 23rd, he was taken ill, and before ten o'clock on Sunday morning he was dead. During the seventeen months which elapsed from the time of the doom pronounced by his physicians until its fulfilment, Wemyss Reid so demeaned himself that none could have penetrated his secret. He was as gay and high in spirit, as strenuous in work, as thoughtful for others, as ever; so that those who knew the fatal truth could not bring themselves to believe it. He was at work for the *Nineteenth Century* the day before he was taken with his final attack. But he himself, cheerful and smiling, never lost the certainty that death hung over him by a thread.

"So much for his courage; and now for the other note that I would touch—his friendship. His ideal of friendship was singularly lofty and generous. He was the devoted and chivalrous champion of those he loved; he took up their cause as his own, and much more than his own; he was the friend of their friends and the enemy of their enemies. No man ever set a higher value on this high connection, which, after all, whether brought about by kinship, or sympathy, or association, or gratitude, or stress, is under Heaven the surest

solace of our poor humanity; and so it coloured and guided the life of Wemyss Reid. His chief works were all monuments to that faith; it inspired him in tasks which he knew would be irksome and which could scarcely be successful, or which, at least, could ill satisfy his own standard. This is a severe test for a man of letters, but he met it without fail. . . . All this seems lame and tame enough when I read it over. But it was true and vivid when Wemyss Reid was living, and giving to his friends the high example of a brave and unselfish life. Among them, his memory will be a precious fact, and an inheritance long after any obituary notice is forgotten. It will live as long as they live; he would scarcely have cared to be remembered by others." Lord Rosebery's kindness to my brother—it was constant, delicate, and unwavering—can never be forgotten by any of his relatives. He was the first visitor to the house of mourning on Sunday, February 26th; he came in haste, with the hope that he might still be in time to see my brother alive.

Here, perhaps, is the place to mention some other of his friends: I mean, of course, those with whom he was most intimate in his closing years. It may be I have forgotten some; if so, I need scarcely add that it is without intention. But I do not like to end without at least recalling his close relations with Lord Burghclere, Mr. Bryce, Sir Henry Fowler, Mr. Edmund Robertson, Sir Henry Roscoe, Sir Norman Lockyer, Sir Frederick Treves, Sir John Brunner, Principal Fairbairn, Dr. Guinness Rogers, the Rev.

R. H. Hadden, Mr. W. H. Macnamara, Mr. Douglas Walker, Mr. J. C. Parkinson, Mr. G. A. Barkley, Mr. Charles Mathews, Mr. J. A. Duncan, Mr. Edwin Bale, Mr. Barry O'Brien, Mr. Herbert Paul, Mr. J. A. Spender, and last, but certainly not least, Mr. Malcolm Morris, who was with him at the end. James Payn, William Black, Sir John Robinson represent the losses of the last few years of his life ; all of them were men with whom—literature and politics apart—he had much in common.

It is impossible to cite the Press comments on the morrow of my brother's death, but room at least must be found for one of them—the generous tribute of his friend Mr. J. A. Spender in the *Westminster Gazette* :—

"I well remember how bravely and serenely he bore his death-sentence and how modestly he communicated it to his friends, as if an apology were needed for speaking of anything so personal. And then he picked himself up and started again, determined that his work should go forward and his interests lose none of their edge, though his days were short. He was the last man in the world to think of such a thing ; and yet to many of us he seemed the perfect example of how a man should bear himself in such a strait. I have heard young men speak of him as old-fashioned, and, judged by some modern standards, his virtues were indeed those of the antique world. He loved his profession for its own sake, believed in its influence and dignity, hated sensationalism—whether in politics or in newspapers—would rather that any

rival should gain any advantage over him than that he should divulge a secret or betray the confidence of a friend. And so he came to be the confidant and adviser of many eminent men who were attached to him for his sterling qualities of head and heart, for his knowledge, his integrity, his admirable common-sense. Of all his qualities none was more attractive than the staunchness of his friendship. To those whom he really liked, old or young, eminent or obscure, Wemyss Reid was always the same, a champion who would brook no slight, and whose help was readiest when times were worst. A literary man, he was quite without literary jealousy, and never so happy as when giving a hand-up to a new writer or a young journalist. All of us who knew him are in his debt—*neque ego desinam debere.*"

I will permit myself to make one other quotation, and only one. In September, 1903, we lost our only sister. We three brothers had been at her funeral in Scotland; it was the last time we were all together. I lunched a day or two later with him at the Reform Club, and though, like myself, he was naturally depressed, he spoke cheerfully, and there was nothing to hint that he was more than tired. Three days later, September 19th, he wrote me a long letter, which began with the words, "Heaven knows, I do not want to add to your anxieties at the present moment, but I think I ought to tell you what has happened to me." He then went on to say that his friend Mr. Malcolm Morris had met him at the Club on the same day

that I was there, and, startled by his appearance, had asked him a number of questions. Mr. Morris had been abroad and had not seen him for some time, but he insisted on an immediate visit to a specialist, and this was arranged for the following Saturday, the day on which he wrote the letter from which I am citing. He was told at that interview that his condition was most serious, even critical —in fact, that he had not long to live. So he wrote, "I have clearly to put my house in order, and to wait as calmly as possible for what may happen. The thing has come upon me very suddenly in the end, but I have had forebodings for some time past. You remember what I said to you on my way to Kilmarnock last week? I want nobody to worry about me personally. If my work is to come to an end soon, it will at least have been a full day's work. I know I can count on your brotherly love and sympathy."

Lady Reid and his children were at the moment from home. I went to him at once; he was sitting alone in his house, and he received me with a smile. He talked calmly and without a shadow of fear, and with no hint of repining. He had gathered from the specialist that he had only a few weeks at the most to live, and he told me that as he rode away in a hansom from the house where he had received what he called his sentence of death, he looked at the people in the street like a man in a dream, and with a curious feeling of detachment from the affairs of the world. But he rallied, and went about his work as usual, was as keenly

interested as ever in the politics of the hour, and gave to those who knew how much he suffered an example of submission and fortitude which is not common.

Naturally I saw much of him in his closing days, and in talk with me he nearly always turned to the old sacred memories which we had in common. When I was a mere youth and he at the beginning of his career as a journalist, I remember his telling me never to forget that blood was thicker than water. His letters to me during thirty years, and many practical deeds as well, if I were to publish the one or to state the other, would prove how constantly he himself bore that in mind. Others can speak of his gift as a raconteur, his superb power of work, his moral courage, his quick capacity in the handling of public questions ; all this I know, and I know besides, better perhaps than anyone else who is likely to speak, his intense family affection, his real though unparaded loyalty to conviction, and the magic of a kindliness which was never so apparent as when the way was rough and the heart was sore.

All the letters which arrived after his death —and they came in battalions—were quick with the sense of personal loss. They came from all sorts of people—from school-fellows in the distant Newcastle days, and obscure folk who had their own story to tell of his kindness, to statesmen of Cabinet rank, and men whose names are famous in almost every walk of life. Personally, I think I was most touched by the remark of a poor waiter,

"a lame dog" whom, it seems, he had helped over a difficult stile in life, and who declared that he was "one in a thousand." Assuredly, as far as courage and sympathy are concerned, those simple words were true.

STUART J. REID.

Blackwell Cliff, East Grinstead.
October 12th, 1905.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

One who tries to tell the story of his life and of his personal experiences, public and private, undertakes a task of rare difficulty. Now that I have completed the work that I set myself to perform some years ago, I recognise more fully than I did at the outset the greatness of this difficulty, and I am only too conscious that, at the best, I have succeeded but partially in overcoming it. The egotism which is inseparable from a narrative written, as this necessarily is, in the first person, is perhaps the most obvious of all the defects which it must present to the reader. Quite frankly I may say that, on reading these pages, I am filled with something like confusion by the extent to which I have been forced to bring my own personality, my own sayings and doings, even into those chapters which deal with public affairs. I can only plead in extenuation of my offence that I do not see how it could have been avoided in that which is neither more nor less than an Autobiography. I may add that I have tried always to speak the truth, and have never consciously magnified my own part in the transactions upon which I have touched.

The closing chapters of the story have been written under what seemed to be the shadow of approaching death. Indeed, at one time I had no

hope that I could live to complete my task. No man who writes thus, on the verge of another world, would willingly swerve by so much as a hair's-breadth from what he believes to be the truth. But human nature and human limitations remain the same from the beginning to the end of life, and I am fully conscious of the fact that the soundness of my judgments upon affairs and my fellow-men is not less open to impeachment to-day than when I was moving in the main current of human activity. If in anything that I have written I have wronged any of my fellow-creatures it has been absolutely without intention on my part, and I can only hope that they will vindicate themselves, after the publication of these pages, as quickly and completely as possible.

I have had no exciting story to tell, and no personal triumphs to chronicle. My simple desire has been to write of the persons and events of my own time in the light in which they appeared to my own eyes, and by doing so to give possibly some information regarding them which may be new to many of my readers. I have been always much more of a spectator than of an actor in the arena; but it has been my lot to be very near, for many years, to those who were actively engaged in that "high chess game whereof the pawns are men"; and we have authority for the belief that the onlooker sees more than the actual player of the drama he describes.

I must add that nowhere, except in a few cases in which I make special mention of the fact, have

I trusted to mere hearsay evidence. I have confined myself to that which I know to be the truth, either from my personal observation or from documents of unimpeachable authority. My opinions may be of very little value, but my facts are, I believe, incontrovertible.

WEMYSS REID.

26, *Bramham Gardens, South Kensington,*
January 1*st*, 1905.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

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It was in the old town, now the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne that I first saw the light—March 29, 1842. My father, the Rev. Alexander Reid, was trained first at the University of St. Andrews, under Dr. Chalmers, and afterwards at Highbury College, London, under Dr. Pye-Smith, for the Congregational ministry. On leaving College he settled in 1830 at Newcastle, and there remained for half a century a faithful and honoured preacher, retiring in 1880 amid the esteem of the whole community on Tyneside. He died in 1887 under the roof of my younger brother Stuart, at Wilmslow, Cheshire, a year which was memorable to me in other than a sorrowful sense, since it was then that I settled in London. It was said of my father at the time of

his death, in one of the Newcastle papers, that for a man to be in difficulty or sorrow was a passport to his help and sympathy. My mother was the daughter of Thomas Wemyss, of Darlington, a well known Biblical scholar and critic, a kinsman of the poet Campbell, and a direct descendant of the Stewarts of Ascog, Bute, a family which traced its descent in unbroken succession—with the bar sinister at the start—from Robert II. of Scotland.

Of the six children who grew up in the austerely simple but happy surroundings of my father's home, the eldest, Mary, was the daughter of my father by a previous marriage; she married the Rev. William Bathgate, D.D., of Kilmarnock, and died as recently as 1903, to my great sorrow. My elder brother James, with whom I was most closely associated in boyhood and youth, was always more or less of an invalid, and died at Leeds in 1880—the year in which our mother also passed away. I came next in the family, and my younger brothers are Alexander, now manager of the Dublin and Wexford Railway, and Stuart, who, like myself, has followed journalism and literature. It only remains for me to mention the youngest member of the family, John Paul, a bright and affectionate little fellow of thirteen, whose loss in 1868 threw a shadow over the home which only the passage of long years softened.

Newcastle, in those days, was scarcely a third of its present size, and the river Tyne, which is now a mere ditch, hemmed in on either side by great manufactories, shipbuilding yards, and wharves, from its mouth to a point above Newcastle, was then a fair and noble river, which watered green meadows and swept past scenes of rural beauty. The house in which I was born stood in Elswick Row, and

in the year of my birth—1842—that terrace of modest houses formed the boundary-line of the town on the west. Beyond it was nothing but fields and open country. There was no High Level Bridge in those days, spanning the river and forming a link in the great iron highway between the English and Scotch capitals ; nor had so much as the first stone of the famous Elswick Ordnance and Engineering Works been laid. The future Lord Armstrong, whom I met at dinner not long ago, looking hardly older than when I first saw him, was then a solicitor, whose office stood in Westgate Street, and whose dreams could scarcely have foreshadowed his ultimate destiny. Richard Granger was just completing that great reconstruction of the centre of the town which gave Newcastle so noble and unprovincial an appearance ; but the fine streets he had constructed—finer than any others to be found in England at that period—were still untenanted, and it was melancholy in walking along Clayton Street to see nine houses out of ten mere empty shells without doors or windows.

My earliest recollections start out of the void with great distinctness on one particular day. It was my third birthday, and I can still recall vividly the two boys—myself and my brother James—who were playing together in the garden in front of the pleasant house we then occupied in Summerhill Terrace, when I was called into the drawing-room to receive my birthday gifts.

It is not, however, with the memories of a child that I wish to entertain my readers, except in so far as they may have some intrinsic interest of their own. Dimly I can recall the year of storm

and stress on the Continent, when thrones were toppling and the tide of revolution threatened a general catastrophe ; vaguely, too, I remember the firing of the guns from the old castle, which announced the death of Queen Adelaide in 1849 ; but it was not until 1850 that my real life may be said to have begun. In the spring of that year I went on a long visit to my paternal grandfather at St. Andrews, where his family had been settled for many generations. In the station of Berwick-upon-Tweed the luggage of passengers was examined in order to see that whiskey was not being smuggled across the Border, and I was filled with childish wonder as I watched the process.

St. Andrews, as it was in 1850, bore little resemblance to the well-known pleasure resort of to-day. So far as I can remember, there was not a modern building in the city, and as a picture of an old-world Scottish town it was without a flaw. No club-house faced the sea, nor were there the fashionable residences which adorn the modern St. Andrews. The grass grew and the oats ripened where now stretch the long terraces devoted to summer lodgings for the visitors. North Street and South Street were the two city thoroughfares, if thoroughfares they could be called, seeing that even in them the green weeds grew freely. Antiquity and repose characterised the place as a whole, though in the winter months the stir of young life filled the little city, troops of red-cloaked students passing to and fro between the grey, weather-beaten halls of the University and their lodgings. At the end of South Street stood the ruins of the cathedral with the fine tower, in which the beams of some great vessel of the

Spanish Armada, wrecked on the neighbouring Bell Rock, were carefully preserved, and the graceful arches of the sacred building, for the destruction of which John Knox was responsible. Many generations of my forefathers slept side by side in one particular portion of the cathedral grounds, and here my grandfather used to bring me to play among the tombs and to spell out the names of kinsmen who had died a century or more before my own earthly pilgrimage began. The whole place, with its noble ruins of castle and cathedral, its grey and empty streets, its venerable halls, its green links and fine coast-line, made a profound impression upon my imagination as a child. To this day I can recall not only the scene itself, but the sounds, the colours, the briny odours, the very atmosphere of the place.

Golf was then, as now, the one great amusement of the citizens, though there was this difference between the past and the present. In those days the game was almost unknown to the rest of the world, and to all intents and purposes St. Andrews had a monopoly of it.* We all talked golf, even if we did not all play it. The shop-boys rose betimes of a summer's morning to enjoy a round on the links before breakfast, and learned professors and staid ministers gave their afternoons to the same absorbing pursuit. Child though I was, even I had my clubs, and played in my own fashion at the game.

My grandfather, who had retired from his business as a manufacturer of flax some years before, had a number of poor relations and dependents whom he frequently visited, taking me with him as a com-

* Blackheath, of course, had then, as now, its ancient golf club.

panion. Many of these were weavers, and in those days the weaver carried on his craft at home. I can see distinctly the little stone cottages in the narrow wynds off South Street, which I was wont to visit; I can recall the whirr and rattle of the loom "ben the house," and picture to myself the grave elderly man who on my entrance would rise from the rickety machine in front of which he was seated, and, after refreshing himself with a pinch of snuff, adjust his horn-rimmed spectacles and stare, with a seriousness which to me was somewhat disquieting, at the little English boy who had found his way into his presence. Kind they were without exception, these simple homely folk; but their gravity was hardly to be measured. Stern Calvinists to a man and a woman, the world was clearly to them no playground, no place for the frivolous pursuit of pleasure; and even the innocent sports of a child seemed to jar on their sense of the fitness of things.

It was on Sunday, however, that the full severity of the Scotch Puritanism of that day made itself felt in my inmost soul. Oh, the dreary monotony of those Sabbaths at St. Andrews! The long, long service and yet longer sermon in the forenoon, the funereal procession of the congregation to their homes, the hasty meal, consisting chiefly of tea and cold, hard-boiled eggs, which took the place of dinner, and the return within a few minutes to the kirk, where the vitiated atmosphere left by the morning congregation had not yet passed away. Even when the second service had come to a close, the solemnities of the day were not ended, for the Sunday School met in the late afternoon, and remained in session for a couple of hours. But it was not the

public services, terrible though these were, that formed the most depressing feature of Sunday in St. Andrews; it was the rigid discipline which pervaded her home-life. My grandfather, I believe, was looked upon as being somewhat lax in his religious views, and he was undoubtedly more liberal —perhaps one might say more advanced—than many of his neighbours. Yet even he had to render homage to the universal law. So when Sunday came round the blinds were closely drawn, lest the rays of the sun should dissipate the gloom befitting the solemn day, whilst no voice in the household was raised above a sepulchral whisper. Lucky for me was it that I was sent to bed early, and that thus the horrors of the Sabbath were in my case abbreviated. The older members of the family sat in a silent semicircle round the smouldering fire, each holding, and some possibly reading, a book, the suitableness of which for use at such a time was beyond question. The Bible, the metrical version of the Psalms, and one or two volumes of discourses by divines of undoubted orthodoxy, formed the only literature recognised on these occasions. For myself, I had brought with me from home a copy of the delightful, though now forgotten, book called "Evenings at Home," and my Sabbatical sufferings were intensified by the sight of this volume on a high bookshelf, where it remained beyond my reach from Saturday night till Monday morning.

My life among these grave, elderly men and women would probably have been a sad one but for one fact. Adjoining my grandfather's residence was a small printing office, which he had established some years before for the benefit of a widowed

daughter-in-law. A door opened from the house into the printing office, and through it I would steal whenever I got the chance. It was not only that the journeyman printer (there *were* journeymen in those days) was the kindest of men, whose memory I cherish with affection to this hour, and who never failed to welcome me with a smile and a pleasant word when I invaded his domain. The place had a charm of its own for me, mysterious, inexplicable, but absolutely enthralling. The cases of type, the presses, the ink-rollers, the damp proof-sheets—chiefly of bills announcing public meetings or the "roup" of some bankrupt farmer's stock—filled me with wonder and delight. Child as I was, I saw in these humble implements of the petty tradesman the means by which one mind can place itself in contact with many.

It is not to be supposed that I had even the dimmest perception of anything beyond the most obvious features of the printer's business, but the seed was sown then which was to fructify throughout my whole remaining life, and from the day when I first felt the fascination of that humble printer's workshop, I never ceased to regard myself as in a special degree a child of the printing-press. How delightful were the hours which I and David, the journeyman aforesaid, spent together when business was slack—and it was often slack! Then it was that together we would compose the most wonderful announcements of the great enterprises to which I was to commit myself in after life. Now it was the prospectus of a "genteel academy" of which I was to be the principal, and again it was the announcement of the opening of a vast emporium for the sale of goods of every description under

my direction, that we thus composed and printed. These advertisements were invariably printed on gilt-edged paper in the bluest of ink, and, when I subsequently returned home, excited prodigious envy in my elder brother, who had never been privileged to "see himself in print."

My stay at St. Andrews ended at last in a somewhat melancholy fashion. As the place seemed to agree with me, it was settled that I should remain for a year at least; and in order that the time might not be wasted I was sent to school, the school being the well-known Madras College. Here both boys and girls were taught together. Of the present state of that famous institution I know nothing, nor do I wish to utter a word of disparagement of those who were responsible for its management fifty years ago; but to me, a timid boy who, in spite of his Northumbrian burr, was turned to ridicule as a Cockney by the Fifeshire lads and lasses, it wore the aspect of a veritable place of torment. That classic instrument of discipline, the tawse, was in use at every hour of the day, girls as well as boys receiving barbarous punishment under the eyes of their class-mates. Perhaps the cruelty was not so great as it seemed to me, but at all events it was enough, so far as I was concerned. My dread of the terrible lash grew into a brooding horror, which poisoned my days and destroyed my nights; and before I had been a month at the school I was seized with an attack upon the brain which nearly proved fatal.

Let me mention here, by way of testifying to the orthodoxy of the religious training given to my young soul, that on the first night on which I became delirious I was pursued by a phantom,

plainly visible to my overwrought imagination, which wore the exact guise of the Evil One. Horns, hoofs, tail, and trident, were all clearly seen, and I sprang wildly from side to side of my bed trying to evade the fiend's attempt to capture me, until at last I took refuge, trembling and almost fainting, in my grandfather's arms. My youth and my good constitution carried me safely through an illness of no ordinary severity, and one day, as I lay in bed in the first stage of convalescence, I had the joy of hearing my mother's voice, and of knowing that she was with me once more. A few days later I returned with her to Newcastle, and thus ended the attempt to make a Scotsman of me.

My visit to the North, however, had the effect of stimulating my intelligence, and giving me a real interest in things around me. Travel had, in short, done its usual work of instructing and vivifying the mind. Henceforward I had a standard of comparison to apply to home scenes and experiences which I had not previously possessed. One favourite resort of ours at home was a grove of trees situate midway between the outskirts of the town and the village of Benwell. To us children, and to certain other young folk who were our playmates, it was known as Diana's Grove, though whether the name came from some fancy of our own or some bygone tradition, I was never able to ascertain. On the maps of those days it bore quite another designation. It was a delightful spot, and when, accompanied by our nursemaid, my brothers and I set off to spend a long summer morning there, we seemed to have reached the height of bliss. The grove was separated from

Elswick Lane by sloping fields, where wheat and barley grew luxuriantly, and the narrow path by which we ran, shouting with joy, through these fields to our haven among the trees led past a little fountain at which we always stopped to drink. The grove itself was a small wood of oak and fir trees, covering a piece of rising ground from which the most delightful views of the beautiful Tyne Valley and the country lying south of the river were to be obtained. How often as a child, when tired with my boyish games, I have sat with my brother beneath one of the trees of the grove, and looked with eyes of wonder on the scene before me! The noble river seemed to flow almost at our feet, and the only signs of life upon its surface were the great keels passing slowly up and down. Beyond it were the green meadows of Dunstan, whilst, rising behind them, was the fine amphitheatre crowned by the pretty village of Wickham and the woods of Ravensworth and Gibside. Young as I was, I could quote poetry; and I remember how, as I looked upon this scene, there invariably occurred to me the lines—

> "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
> Stand dressed in living green;
> So to the Jews old Canaan stood
> While Jordan rolled between."

Away yonder, across the brimming river, was the Canaan of my imagination—the mysterious, unknown land into which my little feet were so eager to wander, reckless of what might happen there. Why do I dwell upon this simple scene? I do so because, alas, it is now a scene of the past. Where my young comrades and I made merry fifty years

ago in the shade of the oak trees, or beside the well in the meadow, there is now a vast cemetery, and some of those who played with me there now sleep peacefully almost in the shadow of the Diana's Grove we loved so well. And the prospect from the grove—where is it now? Along the north bank of the Tyne, at that very spot, stretch the immense works of Lord Armstrong, whilst the houses of his workmen, in thickly-planted streets, cover the fair meadows of my youth, and the dense cloud of smoke for ever rising from forge and furnace blots out the prospect of the southern shore.

Hardly less melancholy is the change which has overtaken the favourite seaside resorts of my childhood. Tynemouth was the earliest watering-place of which I knew anything. In those days the pleasant village, not yet defiled by the soot of Shields, consisted of three streets, called respectively Front Street, Middle Street, and Back Street. There was no great pier casting its mighty arm into the sea across the mouth of the river, and the favourite resort of visitors, the place where we children played and bathed, and our elders lounged and read or flirted, according to their tastes, was the quaint little haven now given up to the pier works. How high the breakers were that rolled into that haven as I stood, a wondering child, and watched them from the shore! I have tossed on many seas since then, and have stood on many a storm-swept headland; but nowhere have I seen waves so high—so irresistible in their majesty, as those waves at Tynemouth seemed to my innocent eyes to be.

Far greater than the change at Tynemouth is that

which has taken place at Whitley, another of our favourite summer resorts, on the delightful Northumbrian coast. What Whitley is now I do not know; but when I last saw it, more than a dozen years ago, it had become a rambling, ugly, ill-built town, chiefly given over to lodging-house keepers, though redeemed by its fine stretch of hard sand. Very different was the Whitley with which I first made acquaintance in 1849. There was no lodging-house in the place; nothing but a sequestered village, which could not boast of church or chapel, and which had only one small shop. My parents used to hire a charming little cottage belonging to the village blacksmith. Its front opened upon the village street, and behind was a garden, full of the simple cottage flowers which are so strangely unfamiliar to those doomed to dwell in towns. A summer-house, clothed in honeysuckle, was one of the features of the garden, and the delicious scent seemed to me in those happy days, when I first reached the cottage on one of our summer holidays, to be as it were the fragrance of heaven itself. Nobody else seemed to visit Whitley in those first years of our sojourn there; so that we had the noble stretch of sands and the long line of cliffs almost to ourselves during the long summer's day, and my father, lying on the yielding turf above the sands, could study his sermon for the coming Sunday at peace, unmolested and almost unseen by any man. There must still, I suppose, be spots somewhere on the long coast-line of this island where one might find combined the peace, the seclusion, and the beauty of that bit of Northumberland as I knew it fifty years ago; and yet, whatever my understanding may

say, my heart tells me that I shall never again see anything like the Whitley of my youth.*

It was in the autumn of 1850 that a rather curious adventure befell me, which might well have cut short my career, and prevented these pages from ever seeing the light. We were about to remove from Summerhill Terrace to a house not far distant which had just been bought by my father, and, as it happened, one dull afternoon I was left alone at home, my mother and the servants being all engaged at the new house. I was left with strict injunctions to "put the chain on the front door," and to bolt the kitchen door, which was on a lower level than the other. The first order I obeyed, but the second, under the temptation of an entrancing story in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* which absorbed my thoughts, I entirely forgot. I was devouring this story, as only children do devour stories, when I heard the front door opened. I was sitting in the parlour, at the back of the house, so that I could not see anyone enter the garden. Running to the door, under the belief that my

* Since these pages were penned, the memory of the blacksmith's cottage at Whitley has been vividly brought back to me under rather singular circumstances. In the spring of 1895 I was dining in Downing Street with Lord Rosebery, then Prime Minister. Next to me at dinner was seated Sir James Joicey, the millionaire colliery owner and Member of Parliament. Sir James is, like myself, a Northumbrian, and our conversation naturally turned upon our native county. I spoke of the blacksmith's cottage, and the bower of honeysuckle at Whitley, with the enthusiasm which old memories evoked. To my surprise, there was an answering gleam of pleasure and tenderness on my friend's face. "*You* lived in the blacksmith's cottage?" said he. "Why, so did we when I was a boy!" We found, on comparing dates, that the Joiceys had followed my own parents as tenants of the tiny house when the latter gave it up. To both of us it seemed a far cry from the honest blacksmith's modest cottage to Mr. Pitt's dining-room in Downing Street.

mother had returned, I found myself confronted by two men. They were—or pretended to be—pedlars; and one of them carried a case filled with sham jewellery. Their great desire seemed to be to get me to unchain the door. I was simple enough to tell them that I was alone in the house, but my simplicity did not carry me so far as a compliance with their urgent request. After arguing with me for several minutes, and even endeavouring to bribe me with a trumpery jewel, the men withdrew, muttering. I watched them for a moment, and took note of the keen, earnest gaze they bent upon the house before leaving the garden. But the voice of the charmer in *Tait* was calling too loudly to allow me to dwell upon anything else, and I was quickly back again in the parlour and deep in mystery.

It might have been twenty minutes later that there fell upon my startled ear a sound which under the circumstances was distinctly sinister—that of a man's foot on the sanded floor of the kitchen passage below. A timid child at all times, there is no need to say that when I crept to the head of the stairs, and, after listening there breathlessly for a few seconds, ascertained beyond doubt that more than one man was moving about in the rooms below me, I was filled with almost a paralysing sense of terror. Here at last the "robbers," of whom I and my brother had so often talked in frightened whispers in our beds, were come in good earnest. What was to be done? And then there flashed upon me, like an inspiration, the recollection of a plan which we had talked over together when discussing the best means of driving the robbers from our house, should they ever enter it. We had both agreed,

then, that if we could but induce any ordinary thief to believe that a certain big relative of ours, whose colossal proportions we had often admired, was on the premises, there would be no need to do anything else to make the intruder flee affrighted. My mind was made up. Creeping softly back into the parlour, I seized the tongs. These I hurled suddenly down the kitchen stairs, and when the terrible din thus raised had died out, I cried in my childish treble, "Uncle John! Uncle John! Come downstairs! There are thieves in the house!" There was a cry of rage or alarm from the kitchen, a hurried scuffling of feet on the floor, and then through a window I saw my two friends the pedlars flying through the yard, and pausing not to look behind. I ought, of course, to have forthwith gone downstairs and done my duty by that back door, which I had so shamefully neglected earlier in the day; but I am ashamed to say that my momentary access of courage had entirely died away by this time, and that for no imaginable sum of money would I have dared to descend those stairs, and pass through the dark passage leading to the back door. The thieves were in due time captured and transported for another offence; but my parents refused to prosecute them in order that I might escape the ordeal of a public examination. They were desperate ruffians, and the police declared their belief that if they had known I was alone in the house they would have murdered me.

I now come to my schooldays in the distant years 1852-4. My father, as I have already said, was a minister of religion for fifty years at Newcastle. He was one of the gentlest and noblest of men, one whom I have never ceased to revere as

the very pattern and exemplar of a Christian gentleman. But those who follow such a calling cannot expect to gain riches as their reward, and my father was a poor man. Despite his poverty, he was resolved that his sons should have the best education that he could procure for them. That meant that they must be sent to the best school in the town—Percy Street Academy. So when my elder brother in 1848 was of school age, he took him to Mr., not then Dr., Bruce, to enter him as a pupil. I have no doubt that he went with some trepidation, knowing full well that the school fees would be a heavy tax upon his small income. I was sitting with my mother in the drawing-room of Summerhill Terrace when my father returned, and I saw that there was an unwonted brightness on his gentle face. He told my mother how Mr. Bruce, after examining my brother, had pronounced him to be fully qualified to enter the school; and then my father asked about the fees. The answer he received was, "My dear Mr. Reid, I never take a fee from a minister of religion." And so it came to pass that not only my brother James but myself and my two younger brothers were educated at Percy Street without any fee being paid on our behalf. No one will wonder that I cherish Dr. Bruce's memory with unstinted gratitude and reverence.

Schooldays, despite the popular theory, are, as a matter of fact, generally as uninteresting to the schoolboy as their story is to the public, and I shall not detain the reader with much about this period of my life. Dr. Collingwood Bruce, the father, by the way, of Mr. Justice Bruce, was then and long afterwards the most famous school-

master in the North of England, and under him I received that small fraction of my education which a man usually obtains during pupilage. Percy Street Academy, Newcastle, has long since disappeared, after having counted no inconsiderable proportion of the best-known residents among its pupils. It occupied a series of rambling buildings with an imposing house at the end of the row, in which lived "The Doctor," the assistant masters, and the boarders. But though the school is gone, my old schoolmaster died but recently, enjoying to the last the respect of his fellow citizens and the repose of a happy old age. He is known to fame as the author of the leading work on the Roman Wall, and as an antiquary of high repute. I have a grateful recollection of many of his acts during my school career; and, looking back, there are none I now esteem more highly than the attempts he constantly made to interest his pupils in the general affairs of the world outside the school-gates.

How well, for example, do I remember the school being summoned one morning in November, 1854, to the large writing room! Here the Doctor was standing at his desk awaiting us, armed with a copy of the *Times*. It had just arrived, and it contained W. H. Russell's brilliant account of the battle of Inkermann. In a few well-chosen words, the Doctor—who was an excellent public speaker—explained that he had called us from our tasks in order that we might listen to the story of a great deed done for England of which every Englishman ought to be proud; and then he read the whole story of the battle as it is told in Russell's graphic narrative, whilst we boys cheered each deed of

English valour and groaned at the Russians as lustily as though we had been ourselves spectators of the fight. It was a wise act on the part of Dr. Bruce, and many others besides myself must have been grateful to him for having thus made us participators in the emotion which in those stirring times thrilled the nation.

It was before the Crimean War, however, that we in Newcastle passed through an experience the like of which I shall hardly encounter again. Newcastle was then notorious for its bad sanitation. A great part of the town consisted of houses of extreme antiquity, crowded together in narrow alleys in the neighbourhood of the river. These alleys, I may note in passing, were known as "chares"—a designation which used habitually to puzzle the Judges of Assize when they had to inquire into the circumstances of one of the not infrequent riots which in those days chequered the harmony of life on the banks of the Tyne. It was towards the end of July, 1853, that the rumour spread, reaching even a schoolboy like myself, that the cholera was approaching. A few weeks later it was with us in all its grim reality. Its actual appearance in the town was preceded by an extraordinary phenomenon which may, or may not, have been connected with the epidemic. One hot morning in August, when I left home for school, I was struck by the curious appearance of the atmosphere. No sooner had I stepped out of doors than I found that the strange dimness which pervaded everything was due to swarms of minute flies, which literally darkened the skies and settled in innumerable hosts upon every object animate and inanimate. It was impossible to breathe without

inhaling these loathsome insects whenever the mouth was opened, and in order to protect ourselves my brother and I fastened our pocket handkerchiefs over our faces and walked to school in this fashion. We found that most other persons had adopted the same device. The plague lasted in Egyptian intensity for the whole of that day. The next day it had to a certain extent subsided, and on the third the dead flies might have been seen literally in heaps, each one of which must have contained countless thousands, in the corners of halls and passages. Everybody connected this most disagreeable phenomenon with the approach of the pestilence, and, whether they did so rightly or wrongly, the cholera only too certainly followed upon its heels.

Its first appearance raised feelings of terror in many hearts. I confess for myself that when I heard that three persons had died of cholera in the town on the previous day I fell into a small panic ; but it was then that my mother, always a deeply religious woman, seeing how things were going with us, called her children together, and in the happiest manner succeeded in converting our dread of an unknown and mysterious evil into a perfect and childlike trust in the protection of a Heavenly Father. What she said I cannot now recall ; I only know that from that moment, whilst many of our companions in school and at play went about with pallid faces and unstrung nerves, all our fears seemed as if by magic to have vanished. But the reality of the plague was terrible indeed, and the month of September, 1853, is never likely to be forgotten by anyone who then lived at Newcastle. It was not merely that the mortality was

enormous, the deaths on some days being above a hundred, but that the circumstances attending the plague were of a gruesome and harrowing character. Not a few of the scenes in the streets recalled the story of the Great Plague of London. We had the same incidents of the dead lying unburied because there were none left to carry them to the grave. We had the piles of coffins waiting for interment in the churchyard. We had sad stories of men seen wheeling the corpse of wife or child in a barrow to the place of burial. In the evenings workmen carried burning disinfectants through the streets, the blue flames and sickening stench of which heightened the horrors of our situation. And perhaps most awful of all was the suddenness with which the disease slew. One evening in that terrible month my brothers and I were playing in the garden of our next-door neighbour with his children; by-and-by he himself came out to smoke his evening pipe, and as usual he had a kindly word for each one of us. We left him, when we went to bed, sauntering in the placid eventide among the flowers he was wont carefully to tend. When I got downstairs next morning a rough country servant, who was then in our employment, bluntly told me that "that laddie B——" (naming our neighbour) had died of the cholera during the night.

It is easy to conceive the effect which an incident like this necessarily had upon the mind of a child; and there were many such incidents. I verily believe that if we had not been clad by our mother's care and wisdom in that armour of trusting faith, we should have suffered irremediable injury. As it was, it became apparent that we must be

removed from the plague-stricken town. But whither could we go? No visitor from Newcastle or any other riverside town could find admittance into any of the lodging-houses on the coast. Happily a port of refuge was open to us in the little blacksmith's cottage at Whitley, and thither, to our great relief, we were transported about the time when the virulence of the epidemic began to abate. My father had himself suffered from an attack of the disease, probably incurred whilst visiting, with quiet but unstinted devotion, the sick, and I also had had a very slight touch of it. The fine air of Whitley and the sunny hours spent on the lonely sands did wonders for us all; and when we returned home it was to find Newcastle restored to its ordinary life, with only the empty places in many households to remind us of the ordeal through which the town had passed.

I have spoken of the resemblance between this outbreak of cholera and the Great Plague of London. Curiously enough, the likeness between the experiences of the northern town in the nineteenth century and the capital in the seventeenth was to be made yet closer. It was just a year after the epidemic had passed away that we were visited by another calamity, infinitely less appalling, and yet at the time of its occurrence far more startling. Sound asleep in the middle of a dark October night, I began to dream, and, naturally enough at the time, my dreams were of the war which had then begun. A Russian fleet escaping from the Baltic had sailed up the Tyne and was bombarding Newcastle. So ran my vision, and its effect was heightened by the firing of the guns I heard in my sleep.

Suddenly my dream and everything else vanished from my mind, driven out by a shock the like of which I had never experienced before. I was sitting up in bed, trembling violently, and wondering what awful thing it was that had broken in upon my slumbers. It was a sound—but such a sound! Nothing approaching to it had ever fallen on my ears before; and even when wide awake I still heard its echoes vibrating around me. My brother James, strange to say, had slept peacefully through the roar of an explosion the noise of which was heard at Sunderland, fourteen miles away. In response to my cries he awoke, and at my urgent request went to the window, which I was myself at the moment too much unnerved to approach. Directly he drew aside the curtain the room was filled with a glare that rendered every object as plainly visible as in broad daylight. We believed that a large building used as a tannery immediately behind our house must be on fire, but the building stood, and we saw that the glare which lighted up the whole heavens was far away. It was shortly after three o'clock on the morning of October 6th, 1854. Presently our natural agitation was increased by a violent knocking on the front door of the house at that untimely hour. It was the old man who "kept" my father's chapel at Tuthill Stairs, and he brought with him a doleful story. Evidently hysterical from the shock he had received, he told my father, amid his sobs, that half of Newcastle and Gateshead had been blown down by a frightful explosion in one of the Gateshead bonded warehouses; that the dead and dying were lying about in hundreds, and that, to crown everything, Tuthill Stairs Chapel had been destroyed.

It was indeed a tale of woe ; and though my father promptly discounted it, it was impossible to doubt, with the evidence of that flaming sky before our eyes, that something very terrible had happened. Whether old Dixon expected my father to act as an amateur fireman, or whether he hoped for services of a more spiritual kind, I do not know ; but he resolutely refused to return to the scene of the disaster unless my father accompanied him. So by-and-by my brother and I found ourselves accompanying my father and the chapel-keeper on their way to the fire.

A strange spectacle it was which was presented to us. Thousands of persons were hurrying down towards the river side ; and upon their faces shone the reflection of the glowing sky. By-and-by, as we came within range of the effects of the explosion, we found broken windows and shattered doorways on every side. It was not, however, until we reached the High Level Bridge, and from the giddy height of the roadway looked down upon the river and the two towns, that we realised the full extent of the disaster which had happened so suddenly. To our right, as we stood on the bridge, raged a fire of immense extent. The flames were roaring upwards from one of the great bonded warehouses of Gateshead, and threatening at every moment to attack the old parish church, which stood like a rock strangely illumined in the glare ; to our left, in the crowded streets and alleys of the lower part of Newcastle, I counted no fewer than seven fires burning fiercely in different places, whilst on the river there were three ships in flames. It was wonderful to look up and see burning sparks and fragments hurtling through air, resembling nothing

so much (I thought at the time) as a snowstorm every flake of which was a point of fire ; it was wonderful, too, to see the shipping in the river, the broad stream itself, and the long lines of houses on either side glowing in the dancing flames. We could hear the rush of the fire heavenwards ; we could see the mere handfuls of men—soldiers, police, and what not—who were vainly striving to cope with the terrible enemy they had so suddenly been called upon to face ; and even as we looked we saw fresh fires break out, and above the roar of the mighty furnace on the Gateshead side—with the glowing crater which marked the site of the great explosion—could hear at intervals the cries of the workers. Looking back, I think that was upon the whole the most sublimely impressive sight I ever beheld. The two burning towns ; the river between them glittering as though its waters had been turned to gold ; the dense silent crowds around me—these made up a picture the memory of which can never fade.

Though old Dixon's "hundreds of dead and dying" was the wildest of exaggerations, there had been a most lamentable loss of life as a consequence of the explosion. What had happened was this : about midnight a fire had broken out in a vinegar manufactory in the densely-crowded district of Gateshead lying between the parish church and the river. This fire, baffling the efforts of the fire brigade, spread quickly, until it reached some large bonded warehouses adjoining the vinegar manufactory. By this time it had acquired such proportions that it had been found necessary to summon the military from the Newcastle Barracks to assist in the effort to extinguish it, whilst vast

crowds of people assembled, not only in the neighbourhood of the fire itself, but on the bridges and Newcastle quay, from which an excellent view was to be obtained. The fire at last reached a warehouse owned by a gentleman named Bertram, and here it assumed a new character. The exact contents of the warehouse remain undiscovered to this day. At the time it was freely asserted that Mr. Bertram had, in direct breach of the law, warehoused a large quantity of gunpowder ; but scientific witnesses who were subsequently examined showed that it was possible that certain chemicals stored in the warehouse, when suddenly combined, as by the falling of the floors, would be quite as explosive as gunpowder itself.

Be this as it may, after one or two slight explosions—those which in my dream were transformed into the cannonade of a Russian force—the whole warehouse with all its contents was suddenly blown into the air by the force of an explosion seldom equalled in its terrible violence. That explosion not only carried the burning materials across the river to Newcastle, where they quickly produced another conflagration as serious in its character as that which was raging in Gateshead, but inflicted terrible injury both to life and property. The persons in the neighbourhood of the burning building, including soldiers, firemen, police, and Mr. Bertram, the owner of the warehouse, were instantly killed ; and in many cases not a trace of their remains could afterwards be found. On the bridges and on Newcastle quay the great crowds of onlookers were thrown to the ground by the shock, and several were killed outright ; whilst, far and wide, buildings were partially unroofed,

windows broken, and a great and populous district reduced to the state in which one might have expected to see it after a bombardment. The exact number of those killed was never ascertained, but I believe that between thirty and forty persons lost their lives.

As I came away with my father and brother from the scene of the fire, my young nerves received the shock which invariably follows the first sight of death. In the Sandhill—the scene of Lord Eldon's elopement with the beautiful Bessie Surtees—a man was lying on the pavement who had been killed by the force of the explosion. As I passed, they were lifting the body into a cart, and the sight of the head, hanging helplessly like that of a dead bird, was one I never forgot. All that day the fires burned fiercely, and it was not until the third day that they were really subdued. Indeed, on the Gateshead side the ruined warehouses smoked and smouldered for more than a week. In all, the value of the property destroyed was something like a million sterling.

Never shall I forget my morning at school on the day on which the fire first broke out. Boy-like, it was the wonder rather than the horror of the thing which was uppermost in my mind, and I and my schoolfellows, before the morning bell sounded, eagerly related to each other all that we had seen; those who, like myself, had been early on the ground having much to tell to eager listeners. It was only when we had trooped excitedly into our class-rooms, and found ourselves face to face with our masters, that we began to realise the actual solemnity of a catastrophe the like of which had never before befallen an English provincial

town. In the Latin room, where I was due at the opening of the school, I was unfeignedly surprised to see Mr. Garven, our old classical tutor, sitting in tears at his desk, and I can still hear the broken whispers in which he attempted to speak to us of the terrible event.

It came home, I ought to say, very closely to "Bruce's school." More than one of those killed had been pupils, and the son of Mr. Bertram, upon whom already an excited public opinion was seeking to fasten the responsibility for the explosion, was one of our schoolfellows, and had but the day before joined us in our lessons. Suddenly as, in a half-hearted way, we began our usual tasks, Dr. Bruce entered, pale and agitated. "Boys," he said, "a dreadful thing has happened to our good old town. God knows how far the mischief may extend, and what ruin may be wrought; but we know already that more than one old pupil here have lost their lives, and that some of you boys have lost those near and dear to you. There can be no school to-day. It would not be decent——" And then the Doctor's voice fairly gave way, and we found ourselves dismissed to an unexpected—and, for once, an undesired—holiday. These things sink deep into the youthful imagination, and the memory of them can never be lost. As I look back upon the years I spent at school, that dark October morning stands out with a prominence that causes every other day of my school life to sink into insignificance.

CHAPTER II.

PROBATION.

Aspirations After a Journalistic Life—A Clerk's Stool in the W.B. Lead Office—Literary Ambitions—An Accepted Contribution—The *Northern Daily Express* and its Editor—Founding a Literary Institute—Letters from Charles Kingsley and Archbishop Longley—Joseph Cowen and his Revolutionary Friends—Orsini—Thackeray's Lectures and Dickens's Readings.

ONE day, in the summer of 1856, I was walking along Princes Street, Edinburgh, looking with wonder and delight upon the beautiful panorama that was spread before my eyes. I was little for my age, and the gentleman who was my companion, and who was pointing out to me the many famous buildings and monuments that form the glory of the modern Athens, was leading me by the hand.

Probably he thought me still younger than I was, and treated me as a mere child. I had come to Edinburgh on a brief holiday, and was staying at the house of one of my father's friends. By-and-by, having duly fulfilled his duty as showman, my companion, in a kindly, patronising way, sought to draw me out. "And what do you mean to be, my boy, when you grow up?" he asked. My answer was instantaneous and assured. "I mean to be a newspaper editor, sir." My friend flung my hand from him and burst into a roar of laughter, which surprised me even more than it did the passers-by. "A newspaper editor!" he cried, still convulsed by what appeared to me a most

unseemly, if not offensive, merriment. "Good heavens! And what in the world has put such a thing as that into the child's head?" My wounded dignity came to my aid. Was I not fourteen? and had I not already left school and begun to earn my own living? "I made up my mind a long time ago," I said in the accents of injured innocence. "When I am a man I mean to be that, and nothing else." I had a sad time of it for the rest of the day, for this worthy gentleman appreciated what he regarded as the joke so keenly that whenever he met a friend he stopped him, and said, "Let me introduce to you a live editor—that is to be some day." He enjoyed the situation more than I did.

But it was quite true. Young as I was, I had made up my mind, and was resolved that nothing should move me from my purpose. Perhaps the printer's ink of the dear old composing room at St. Andrews had inoculated me, and made me proof against the usual temptations by which a boy, dreaming of his future path in life, is beset. Or perhaps it was because printer's ink is in the blood of the family. Whatever may have been the cause, journalism was my first precocious love, and my last; and, looking back across the years of heavy work which now separate me from that June morning at Edinburgh, I see no reason to repent my early choice or the loss of every other chance of success in life.

Yet, at the outset, there were a hundred obstacles barring my way to the door through which I longed to pass. I was already, as I have said, at work. Knowing full well the narrowness of my father's means, I had cheerfully taken a situation as a

clerk, and kindly Fortune had smiled upon me in the appointment I secured. Most boys of my time on leaving school went, as it was phrased in those days, "on the quay side" at Newcastle; that is to say, they entered the office of one of the great merchants by whose hands the prosperous trade of the Tyne was carried on. Here their lives were full from morning to night with the business which in such a hive of industry seemed to know no slackening. No doubt, a position in a shipping or colliery office at Newcastle in those days was one to which many advantages were attached. Not a few schoolfellows of my own, starting with no greater advantages than I possessed, have become men of large fortune, have acquired landed estates, have sat in Parliament, have founded county families. But it was not towards these ends that my youthful ambition urged me; and, happily for me, the office to which I went one January morning in the 'fifties, in the humble capacity of junior clerk, had nothing in common with the bustling, worrying places of business on the quay side, where the race for wealth seemed to absorb the thoughts of all, from highest to lowest.

Through the influence of a friend, and chiefly in virtue of my father's name, I secured a place in what was then known as the W.B. Lead Office. There was at that time a certain quality of lead distinguished by these letters which carried off the palm in the lead markets of the world; indeed, its price was constantly from one to two pounds a ton higher than that of any other lead procurable. This lead was obtained from the great mines in Weardale and Allandale, then and for many

generations owned by the Beaumont family. Mr. Wentworth Blackett Beaumont was at that time the head of the family. There was no eager bustle, due to the keenness of business competition, in the quiet rooms of the W.B. Lead Office in Northumberland Street, when I entered it as a boy. The whole of the produce of the mines was sold to half a dozen great London firms, and the sales were made in such large quantities that a score of transactions sufficed for a year's work. How great those transactions were may be gathered from the fact that I sometimes had to make out a single invoice in which the sole item stated represented a sum of £40,000.

Very soon I found that my chief duty as junior clerk in this eminently sedate and respectable establishment was to read the *Times* to my immediate superior. This gentleman I must always remember with a lively sense of gratitude. His name was Fothergill, and, like myself, he had little taste for mere business avocations. He was a student, a lover of literature, a collector of books, and a writer of verse. Fortunate was it for me to meet with such a companion at that stage in my life—the stage when one is most susceptible to outside influences. For five years we sat opposite to each other in the same quiet room, and never once did I hear fall from his lips an unworthy idea or suggestion. He suffered from serious weakness of the eyes, and it was for this reason that so much of my spare time (and it was nearly all spare time there) was devoted to reading aloud to him. He had only a clerk's income, small enough in all conscience, but he never wanted money to spend on a book or a magazine

I remember his delight when the first number of the *Saturday Review*, to which he had subscribed on its appearance, was placed in his hands. From that time forward my daily readings of the leaders in the *Times* were varied by weekly readings of the brilliant sarcasm and invective which then distinguished the new review that had entered the field of journalism with so bold a mien, and was holding its own so fearlessly against all comers. With such a friend, always ready to give me of his best—alas, at the time, in my youthful ignorance of men, I failed altogether to appreciate my good fortune in meeting a companion like this—my mind rapidly expanded, and before I was half way through my teens I was learning to put boyish things behind me. Although Fothergill did not encourage my precocious affection for the press, wisely holding that a literary life was one reserved only for the few, and, like matrimony, not to be "taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly," he did not, as so many men in his place might have done, stamp ruthlessly upon my aspirations or subject them to that cruel sarcasm which is so killing to the ambitions of the young. This, it is true, was done by another person in the same office—the manager; but, fortunately, that gentleman was altogether so obnoxious to me for many reasons that his special dislike of my literary bent, and the sneers with which he greeted my early appearances in print, did not affect my purpose in the slightest degree.

I could say much of those five years of my life spent in the W.B. Lead Office, but I must not weary my readers with that which would be at best a humdrum tale. My education went on

apace. In the evenings I took lessons at home, and during the day, when I was not otherwise engaged, I had always a book or a pen in my hand. How high one's aspirations soar in that season when everything seems possible to the unfledged soul! The glory of Milton itself seemed hardly beyond attainment, and I nursed the illusion that within me lay the potentiality of a new Scott, or Dickens, or Thackeray. Happy, foolish dreams, from cherishing which no man has ever been the worse! A hundred times I essayed to produce something worthy of being printed. But the stories, the essays, and—save the mark!—the poems I attempted had a knack of remaining unfinished, or, when finished, were so obviously bad, even to my untrained judgment, that they were promptly destroyed. When at last I did taste the fearful joys of a first appearance in print, it was on a very humble stage. A great controversy was raging in Newcastle in 1857 over the appointment of the then vicar to another living in the town; an appointment that was obnoxious not only because it was a clear case of pluralism, but because the vicar himself belonged to the then unpopular High Church party. I read the articles in the papers, and the letters in which my indignant fellow-townsmen gave expression to their views, with keen interest, and at last I was myself prompted to join in the fray. Having carefully composed a letter to the editor of the *Northern Daily Express*, which I signed "A Bedesman," I furtively dropped it into the letter-box at the newspaper office, and tremblingly awaited the result.

I had not long to wait. The next morning, as I was on my way to the office, I chanced

upon a contents bill of the *Express*, and there, with dazzled eyes, the testimony of which I could hardly believe, I read the announcement that the paper of the day contained a letter by "A Bedesman." And here I must make a humiliating confession. The price of the paper was a penny, and at that particular moment I discovered that I had not a penny in the world. My weekly pocket-money was sixpence, and it generally went at one of the old bookstalls in the market before the week was far advanced. But I could not face the day before me with the dreadful uncertainty weighing upon my soul as to whether another person might not have adopted the same signature as myself, and whether, consequently, I might not be labouring under a fond delusion. I turned and fled home (fortunately I always started for work in good time), and asked my mother to lend me the penny I needed. In a broken whisper I confided to her the fact that I believed there was really a letter of mine in that morning's *Express*. I got my penny, and in a few minutes I was feasting my eyes upon that sight—dearer than any other the world can show to the young literary aspirant —my first printed composition. I had then just entered my fifteenth year.

Not one writer in a thousand has stopped at a first book, and not one newspaper contributor in a million has stopped at a first letter to the editor. Like much better people, I had made the discovery that whilst my opinions regarding the Genius of Shakespeare, the Art of Fiction, and the Character of Cromwell were not wanted by anybody, there were some questions cropping up, as it were, at my own door, about which I might, if I liked,

give an opinion that some persons at all events would think worth printing. In short, I was enabled to see that though I could not fly, I might at least walk. How eagerly I turned to profit the discovery I had thus made need not be told here. For the moment my ambitious designs were laid on one side. I no longer dreamed of an Epic that should rival "Paradise Lost" or a novel that might outshine "Vanity Fair"; but I prepared to discuss the local questions of the hour, the site of a post office, the opening of a hospital, the grievance of some small public official, with the zest which I had only felt hitherto when dealing with the great literary and social problems, to the discussion of which my untrained intelligence could contribute nothing of value. What I wrote on such topics as those I have named I cannot pretend to remember; but there must have been some little promise in my contributions to the *Express*, for one memorable day, when I got home from work, my father told me that he had received a visit from Mr. Marshall, the chief proprietor of that paper, and that this visit closely concerned me. Mr. Marshall had inquired as to my age and occupation, and having suggested that my leaning towards journalism ought not to be repressed, had offered to have me taught shorthand by the reporter of the *Express*. Finally he had left with my father half a sovereign, which he desired me to accept in payment of my various contributions to the paper. So, whilst I was still a mere boy, not having as yet entered on my sixteenth year, I found myself enrolled among the more or less irregular camp-followers of journalism.

It was indeed a rapturous moment when I

heard this news. If I had been allowed, I would forthwith have thrown up my place at the W.B. Lead office and taken service—even the humblest—on the Press. But on this point my father was firm. I must stick to my proper work for the present, though there could be no harm in my devoting my evenings to such study and practice as might fit me for journalism hereafter. Not that he or my mother desired to see me become a journalist. The Press—at all events in provincial towns—in those days was the reverse of respectable in the eyes of the world; and truly there was some reason for the low esteem in which it was held. The ordinary reporter on a country paper was generally illiterate, was too often intemperate, and was invariably ill-paid. Again and again did my mother seek to check my eager yearning for a life on the Press with the repetition of dismal stories dinned into her ears by sympathising friends, who deplored the fact that her son should dream of leaving so secure and respectable a position as a clerkship in the W.B. Lead Office for the poor rewards and dubious respectability of a newspaper career.

There was an old friend of my father's—Innes by name—who took it upon himself to remonstrate with me. After exhorting me fervently for some time, he sought to illustrate the dangers of the course on which I was anxious to embark by a personal experience. "Thomas," he said solemnly (and oh, how I hated to be called Thomas!), "I knew a laddie called Forster. His father was a most respectable, decent man, that kept a butcher's shop at the top o' the Side—a first-rate business; and this laddie—his name was John—got just such

notions into his head as ye have; he was always reading and writing, and nothing would suit him but to go to college instead of sticking to the shop. And at last he went away to London, and his poor father died, and the business went all to pieces, and I've never heard tell of that laddie from the day he went to London until now. He's died of starvation, most likely, by this time."

"Why, Mr. Innes," I cried, "do you really mean to say that you have never heard of Mr. Forster's books—his Life of Oliver Goldsmith and 'The Arrest of the Five Members'? He's one of our great writers now, and if I could only reach a position like his——" But this prospect was so dazzling that it fairly took my breath away, and I lapsed into silence, delighted to find that my old friend's "awful example" should have been a man in whose footsteps I most ardently desired to tread.

As I have mentioned the opposition which my parents offered to my design to become a journalist, it is only right that I should say that if it had not been for the atmosphere in which I lived at home, the accomplishment of that design would never have become possible. Ours was a home of narrow and stinted means, but of wide and generous sympathies. We children learned from the example of our dear father and mother to look beyond ourselves and our own small interests upon the battle of life as it was being fought in the world at large. If our table was of the plainest, there were always books and newspapers in the house, and they were not there for show. My mother had a genuine taste for literature, and a judgment which, if not infallible, was at least sound. Many a time would

we discuss together the books we were reading. They were not, as a rule, hot from the Press; but why should they have been, in the case of a boy with all the literary treasures of the world still untasted? My father leaned, as was natural, to the more serious side of literature; but he had a keen interest in public affairs, and he brought to their study a sagacious and well-informed mind. Whilst the spirit in which both he and my mother viewed life and the problems which it daily presented to them was that of a pure and lofty Puritanism, it was broadened and softened, more particularly in the case of my father, by the gentleness and liberality of their own characters. So it was in an atmosphere of culture and liberal thought that I lived my life in those days both at home and at the W.B. Lead Office.

The *Northern Daily Express* was a penny newspaper which laid claim to be the first provincial daily published at that price. The claim has, I believe, been disputed by Mr. Justin McCarthy, who claims the honour for a Liverpool journal with which he was himself at one time connected. But whether first or second, it is certain that the *Express* was very early in the field. It had been started at Darlington in 1855 by a gentleman named Watson. A year later it was transferred to Newcastle, and it was in the *Express* office that I first became acquainted with actual newspaper work. A very curious place was that office when I first knew it. It consisted simply of two rooms and two cellars in a house in West Clayton Street. One of the rooms was devoted to the compositors who set the little sheet; the other was by day the counting-house and the place where the papers

were sold and advertisements received, whilst at night it became the editorial office—the editor, sub-editor, and reporters all working together here at the desks occupied by the clerks during the day. I ought, perhaps, to explain that the staff was not quite so large as my description of it might lead people to suppose. The sub-editor, for instance, doubled his part and acted as reporter also. Still, it was a tight fit in that little room in West Clayton Street when I went there of an evening to write some paragraph or letter for the next morning's paper. In the cellars was the machine on which the *Express* was printed, and the stock of paper.

In one respect, the *Express* was better equipped than is many a pretentious journal of to-day. Its editor—Manson by name—was a man of remarkable ability, and his carefully-prepared leading articles were certainly second to none in the newspaper press of his day. This is a strong saying, but my reader will not think it unjustified when he hears that Manson's services had been eagerly sought for by more than one London newspaper, including the *Times*. He was a man of real genius, but, unfortunately, not without the defects of his qualities. In my young eyes he was a marvel, and almost an idol. To sit beside him, as I sometimes did, whilst he forged the thunderbolts which produced so great an effect upon the opinion of the town, was to me a joy almost too great for words. I would sit and watch the untiring hand moving across the slips of blue paper with a mind filled with the awe and reverence with which a pupil of Michael Angelo might have watched the master at work. I had at last got my foot on

the first rung of the ladder, and my soul was filled with absolute content. True, my days were given to the W.B. Lead Office; but seldom did an evening come round without finding me, on one pretext or another, in the house in West Clayton Street. Indeed, I had now become almost a recognised member of the staff, and my little contributions in the shape of paragraphs, letters, and the inevitable verses appeared almost daily.

I had been trying to teach myself shorthand, and had made some progress with Pitman's system of phonography; but now, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Marshall, I secured the services of a first-rate teacher, and soon made rapid progress in that difficult art. My teacher was Mr. Lowes, an admirable shorthand writer, who wrote a system of his own. To Mr. Lowes, phonography appeared to be the chief evil afflicting mankind. What little things divide the world! In my teacher's opinion it was divided into phonographers and stenographers, and never did the schoolmen of old show more bitterness in maintaining their own shibboleths than did Lowes in asserting the superiority of his system to that of Mr. Pitman—an opinion which I need scarcely say was not shared by the world.

Lowes was a good fellow, and a most kind and patient teacher. Under his guidance I soon acquired a certain amount of facility in ordinary press-work. Contributions to *Chambers's Journal*, the *Leisure Hour*, and one or two minor religious magazines, gave me as the years passed an opportunity of addressing a wider audience than the readers of the *Express*, and though I had as many misfortunes and disappointments as most young

writers, I stuck steadily to my task, and bit by bit strengthened my position in the world of journalism.

There were other fields of activity, besides the press, that I assiduously cultivated. For example, in the plenitude of my wisdom, at the age of seventeen I founded an institution in the west end of Newcastle, not far from my father's church. I called it the "West End Literary Institute," and truly it was designed upon a most ambitious scale. When I recall the way in which I begged money from all and sundry among my friends for the purpose of starting the institute, and the manner in which I pestered distinguished authors for presentation copies of their books, in order to furnish the shelves of the library, I am driven to the painful conclusion that I must have been a terrible person in the days of my youth, and something of a prig to boot. Apropos of the begging for books as free gifts from authors, I had one or two amusing experiences. Among those whom I importuned in this impertinent way were Charles Kingsley, and the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Longley. Kingsley replied to my request in a manner that was as sensible as it was severe, bluntly telling me that he was a poor man who wrote books in order to get money, and who could not afford to give them away. I have written books myself since then, and have had many an application as unreasonable as that which I addressed to the author of "Alton Locke." This fact, perhaps, explains my entire approval of the snubbing which that distinguished man administered to me.

Very different, however, was the response of the

Archbishop of Canterbury. It was a courteous and dignified epistle, expressing his pleasure at being able to comply with my request, and fifteen handsome octavo volumes of sermons were forthwith forwarded to me from Hatchard's. I had other similar experiences, and the result was that when my library was thrown open to the public the amount of theology which it contained far outweighed every other department of literature. However, people came to my reading-room, and I was fortunately able to provide them with other entertainment besides the reading of old sermons. I started a course of lectures and readings. I blush to say that I distinguished myself one evening by reading the play of *Macbeth* to an unhappy audience of bored victims. Heaven forgive me! I carried on my West End Institute for some years, started a flourishing penny bank in connection with it, and formed numerous acquaintances among the more intelligent artisans of the district; but at last the building was wanted for an extension of the Sunday schools connected with my father's congregation, and the little performance came to an end. I trust it had not made me an incurable prig, but I fear that it did not do anybody very much good; though, perhaps, it kept some out of mischief.

No account of Newcastle at this period (1850–60) would be complete without some reference to one of its most notable inhabitants, Mr. Joseph Cowen, commonly known at that time to his fellow-townsmen as "Joe." Mr. Cowen's subsequent career in Parliament, brief though it was, gained for him a reputation for eloquence hardly inferior to that enjoyed by the most illustrious of his contempor-

aries. But in those early days of my youth it was not his eloquence but his advanced opinions about which his fellow-townsmen thought most. He openly professed to be a Republican, in theory at all events, and all his sympathies were engaged on the side of the oppressed nationalities of Europe. A man of culture, of commanding abilities, and of considerable wealth, he lived by choice in the plainest fashion, delighting to be known as one of the people. He dressed at all times in the kind of suit which a Northumbrian pitman wears when not actually at work. Years afterwards, when he had just thrilled all England by a great speech in the House of Commons on the subject of Russian oppression, I chanced to meet him one day in Pall Mall, and, stopping to talk to him, was amused to see the glances of curiosity which were cast at the strangely attired man who had found his way to that fashionable thoroughfare.

Nor was it only in his dress that he affected a likeness to the working-men of Tyneside. In his speech he exaggerated the burr of the Newcastle tongue. Most of us were anxious to get rid of that undesirable distinction. Mr. Cowen clung to it as one of the most precious of his possessions. He had to pay for this piece of affectation in later life, when he became a figure in the House of Commons. His first notable speech in that assembly was on the Royal Titles Bill of Mr. Disraeli. It was a very brilliant performance, greatly admired by those who were able to appreciate it. But, unfortunately, it was not understood by everybody. The day after it was delivered, Mr. Disraeli was questioned at a dinner-party by a lady, who asked him what he thought of the new orator

whose presence had been revealed to the House. "I'm sorry I can't answer your question," said the Prime Minister. "It is true that a gentleman, whom I had never seen before, got up on the Opposition side and made a speech which seemed to excite great enthusiasm in a certain part of the House; but, unfortunately, he spoke in a language I had never heard, and I haven't the slightest idea in the world what he said."

But in the days of which I am now writing Mr. Cowen was still a long way from the House of Commons. His fame, however, was even then of no common kind. He was known throughout Europe as a man willing to befriend, not merely with speech and pen, but with purse, every victim of political oppression. By the despotic Governments of the Continent he was held in feverish hatred, and at one time his modest house at Blaydon Burn was regularly watched by French, Russian, and Austrian spies; nor was it without good reason that the tyrants of Europe saw in him their natural enemy. Under his roof many of the most eminent refugees from the countries I have named and from Italy found a welcome shelter, and in one room in that house was a small printing press on which thousands of revolutionary proclamations in all the languages of Europe had been printed. Mazzini, Garibaldi, Kossuth, Felice Orsini, and scores of other notable revolutionaries whose names I forget, were his friends and guests, and through his influence a large party of us in Newcastle were led to take almost as warm an interest in political affairs on the Continent as in the movements of parties at home. Again and again in those days, when France was crushed under the heel of

the Second Empire, when Poland was vainly writhing in her cruel bonds, when Hungary was filled with the spirit of rebellion, and when the people of Italy were taking their first steps by the intricate paths of conspiracy and insurrection towards unity and freedom, Joe Cowen would find some excuse for summoning a public meeting in the old Lecture Room, Nelson Street, in order that we might listen to some patriot exile as he told the story of his country's wrongs, or give expression to our own detestation of the despotism which at that time weighed upon Europe, from the banks of the Seine to those of the Volga.

No impressionable youth could fail to be affected by such an influence as this, and if in those days I shrank from Mr. Cowen's views on home politics as being too advanced, I was one of the most enthusiastic of his adherents in his self-appointed mission against the tyrannies of the Continent. How well do I remember some of the faces and figures of Mr. Cowen's friends and guests! I can still see Kossuth with his grey hair and wrinkled brow, and Mazzini with his melancholy eyes and handsome face; I can still hear the tones of Louis Blanc as he stands on the platform of the lecture room and talks to us in excellent English of the epoch of the Great Revolution. But the one man whose face and figure dwell most vividly in my recollection is Orsini, the great Italian who, after a lifetime spent in the attempt to deliver Tuscany and Lombardy from the yoke of the tyrant, died under the guillotine in Paris, and by his death secured for Italy her long-sought freedom. Orsini came to Newcastle shortly after his escape from an Austrian dungeon at Mantua, and addressed a

great meeting in the Lecture Room. He spoke English fairly well; but it was the appearance of the man, and the knowledge of all that he had suffered in the struggle for Italian freedom, that appealed to one more eloquently than his words. Never had I seen any man whose appearance equalled that of this Italian martyr who died as an assassin. His features were almost faultless, whilst his jet-black hair set off the lustrous pallor of his complexion with extraordinary effectiveness. Attired in fashionable evening dress, his hands encased in white kid gloves, and a smile, gentle rather than pathetic, lighting up his beautiful face, he looked the last man in the world whom one would naturally associate with desperate deeds. Yet, not many weeks after I had grasped his hand, he had brought about the terrible attempt upon the life of the Emperor Napoleon, when the latter was driving through the Rue Lepelletier, Paris, by which many innocent persons perished, and was himself lying in prison under sentence of death. Mr. Cowen once told me that it was he who provided the funds for carrying out Orsini's plot against Louis Napoleon's life, but he did so in absolute ignorance of the fact that this was the purpose to which the money was to be appropriated. He understood that it was wanted for the equipment of another insurrectionary expedition against the Austrians in Italy, and he willingly subscribed the amount asked for.

As for Orsini, he met his death like a hero; but it is well known that before dying he succeeded, as a leading member of the Carbonari, in extracting from the French Emperor, who had himself belonged to that society, a promise

that he would free Italy from Austrian oppression. By giving that promise, Louis Napoleon was delivered from the fear of violent death at the hands of the Carbonari, whilst his fulfilment of it in the war of 1859 gave Italy her first great step towards unity and freedom. Even the romantic page of history has never recorded a more notable transaction than that which thus took place in a condemned cell between an assassin lying under sentence of death and a reigning Emperor; nor would it be possible to denounce regicide so absolutely as most of us do if there were many instances in which it had proved so successful as it did in the case of Orsini.

I have dwelt at undue length on an episode which my readers probably think altogether outside the scope of this narrative, but it does not lie quite so far apart from it as they may imagine. It was my association as a boy with Mr. Cowen's enthusiastic assertion of the rights of oppressed nationalities, and the stirring of my spirit which necessarily resulted from contact, however slight, with men like Kossuth and Orsini, that first made me a real Liberal in politics.

As I have mentioned the Lecture Room—a dismal, stuffy, ill-lighted little theatre—I may refer to two meetings unconnected with foreign politics which I remember in it. One was in 1857, when the Dissenters of Newcastle had revolted against the domination of the Whig clique, and at the general election had set up a candidate of their own. They had great difficulty in finding one, for they required a man who would pay his own expenses (in those days a very serious item), and the chance of success was by no means brilliant.

At last, however, they secured a rich retired Bombay merchant, and he came down to Newcastle forthwith to address his first meeting. The Lecture Room was crowded with enthusiastic Nonconformists, and these were the words with which the unhappy candidate began his speech: "Gentlemen, four-and-twenty hours ago, if anybody had asked me where Newcastle-on-Tyne was, I could not have told them." This, to an audience full of the local pride which possessed the soul of every genuine Newcastle man! I need hardly say that, having ascertained where Newcastle was, Mr. C. speedily departed from it, amid a storm of indignation, never again to be seen in its streets.

More vivid still is my recollection of the Lecture Room on the occasion when Thackeray delivered his lectures on the Four Georges to an audience more select than numerous. I was at the age when, as the author of "Vanity Fair" himself has said, "to behold Brown, the author of the last romance, in the flesh, is a joy and a delight." Anybody who had written a book seemed to me to be a hero; what was it then to see and to hear the literary idol of my youth? Thackeray, with his tall figure, his silvery hair, his upturned face, expressive and striking, though by no means beautiful, seemed to me as I sat on my bench and listened to him to be nothing less than one of the gods. He was an admirable lecturer; his voice was musical and clear, his pronunciation singularly distinct and accurate, and the little touches of sarcasm and humour which he conveyed to his audience by a tone or an inflection, quite inimitable. I heard, as I sat listening to his lecture on George the Third —by far the best of the series—someone near me

yawn, and my soul was filled with horror at what I thought nothing less than an act of sacrilege. I never saw the great novelist except on the occasion of his visit to Newcastle, but to the end of my days it will be a delight thus to have beheld him in the flesh. Dickens I heard read several times, though never in the Lecture Room ; yet I cannot say that any of his readings made upon me the impression produced by Thackeray's lectures. The actor and the arts of the popular entertainer were too plainly visible in all that he did, and I received something like a shock when, having written an enthusiastic but juvenile panegyric upon him on the occasion of one of his visits to Newcastle, I learned that he had sent his secretary to buy a dozen copies of the paper to send to his friends. That so great a man should have thought a mere newspaper effusion worth noticing seemed to me altogether incredible. The reader may smile at the confession, but I own I never thought quite so much of Dickens, as a man, after this incident. This only shows how high was the pedestal upon which I had placed him, and how slight was my knowledge of human nature.

CHAPTER III.

MY LIFE-WORK BEGUN.

On the Staff of the *Newcastle Journal*—In a Dilemma—Lord John Russell and Mr. Gladstone at Newcastle-upon-Tyne—Mr. Gladstone's Triumphal Progress—A Memorable Colliery Disaster—A Pit-Sinker's Heroism—Adventure at a Dickens Reading.

At last my term of probation came to an end. My friend and teacher, Mr. Lowes, after a temporary absence from Newcastle, had returned to it to undertake the editorship of the *Newcastle Journal*, a weekly Tory newspaper which was about to appear in a daily edition. We had kept up our friendship, and to my intense delight he offered me the post of chief reporter on the daily paper. This was in the spring of 1861. My father had come, reluctantly enough, to the conclusion that I must be allowed to go my own way, and accordingly, on July 1st in that year, I entered on my career as a professional journalist. On the previous day I had said good-bye to the W.B. Lead Office, and to Mr. Fothergill, whose kindly interest in my fortunes had never wavered, and whose own literary tastes and sympathies led him at last to look with something like approval on the step I was taking. Never was a young subaltern prouder of his first commission than was I of an appointment which gave me a recognised standing, however humble, on the English Press.

Nor was I without substantial reason for my

delight at the change in my lot. My work at the W.B. Lead Office had been light enough in all conscience; but the drudgery of official routine, the strict keeping of office hours, and the monotony which made one day the counterpart of any other, were no more to my liking than they are to the liking of anyone who is young and high-spirited. All this was now at an end. No special hours had to be kept, and no two days were the same. Instead of the four walls of my office, I now had the whole of the northern counties as my sphere of work. To this hour I remember the delight with which on my second morning at the *Journal* office I set off, in company with the reporters of the *Chronicle* and the *Express*, to report the Quarter Sessions at Hexham. A poor task no doubt it was, but it involved a journey up the beautiful Tyne valley, and a glimpse of the old abbey town; it meant, in short, the change from a life of drudgery to one of adventure, and that morning I felt that I had recovered my lost youth.

But enough of my own feelings. The readiness with which I adapted myself to my new surroundings, the zest with which I entered into the friendships of my new comrades, certainly indicated that I had something, at all events, of the Bohemian in my nature. Of the public events of that year, 1861, there is comparatively little to be said. I remember, indeed, that I happened to be acting for the first time as sub-editor in the temporary absence of my friend, Mr. Lowes, when I received a telegram announcing that the first shot had been fired in the American War. Some two or three months later Newcastle was favoured with a visit from Lord John Russell, who had recently

accepted an earldom. He was entertained at a great banquet in the Town Hall, whereat all the Whig notabilities of the North of England assembled to do him honour. Now, in my days, provincial reporters were an unsophisticated race. To a young journalist, living in Newcastle, the journalism of London seemed so remote and unattainable that it might as well have been in another planet. The sight of a reporter for one of the London dailies was awe-inspiring, and the notion of being called upon to work in the company of so august a being almost took one's breath away.

It fell out that at the Russell banquet it was arranged that his speech should be reported in short "turns" by the whole body of reporters present. This is an arrangement now, I believe, in universal use, the object being to get the report out quickly. But in 1861 it was almost unknown on the provincial press, and this was my first experience of it. Perhaps I was unnerved by the presence of a couple of *Times* reporters, or perhaps my knowledge of shorthand was not then all that it should have been. Be this as it may, I have to confess with regret that in reporting my turn of the great statesman's speech I made one woeful blunder. Lord Russell said (I quote from memory) that we saw now in the New World that which had so often been seen in the Old—a struggle on the one side for empire and on the other for independence. Now in the system of shorthand which I had learned, the word "independence" is represented by an arbitrary symbol, consisting of two dots, one above the other, like a colon. When I came to write out my turn, I found to my horror that the signification of this particular symbol had

escaped my memory. There it was, staring me in the face from my note-book, but what it meant for my very life I could not at the moment tell. And the telegraph messengers were pestering me for my copy, and, worst of all, the reporters from London seemed to my guilty conscience to be eyeing me askance, and wondering what the delay meant. In a desperate moment I made a guess, not at the meaning of my symbol, but at some word which might take its place, and possibly pass unnoticed ; so I represented Lord Russell as having said that we saw in the New World, what we had often seen in the old, a struggle on the one side for empire, and on the other for power. If it did not make absolute nonsense of the speaker's words, it certainly robbed them of all their point and meaning, and yet history is based upon blunders like this. And years afterwards I saw in a certain volume this mutilated sentence printed as Lord Russell's judgment upon the causes of the great rebellion. Never did anybody feel more ashamed of himself than I did at that time, and never again was I caught in a similar dilemma.

Newcastle was very fond in those days of entertaining the distinguished stranger. Lord Russell's visit in 1861 had been such a success that twelve months later the Liberals of the town resolved to invite Mr. Gladstone to be their guest. Mr. Gladstone was at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was not very long since he had ceased to be a Conservative ; but already he had incurred the suspicions of a section of the Liberal Party, and the old Whigs of Northumberland would have nothing to do with his visit to the Tyne. But Mr. Gladstone did not need the sympathy or

countenance of the Brahmins of Liberalism. He came, he was seen, and he conquered. Rarely have I seen anything to compare with the enthusiasm which fired the people of Tyneside during the two days he spent amongst them in October, 1862. I have said elsewhere that this visit was one of the turning-points in Mr. Gladstone's life. He himself practically acknowledged this to me in after-days. It was the first occasion in his career on which he had been brought into close contact with a great industrial community. It was the first time that he was treated as the popular idol by an overwhelming multitude of his fellow men. On the first day of his visit he was entertained at a banquet in the Town Hall, and it was in his speech after dinner that he made one of the notable mistakes of his great career. The Civil War in America, to which Lord Russell had alluded twelve months before, was still raging. I need hardly say that the sympathies of the upper classes were enthusiastically with the South. The names of the public men of eminence who favoured the North might have been counted upon one's fingers. Mr. Gladstone believed in the cause of the Confederates, and in this speech at Newcastle he declared that Jefferson Davis had created not merely an army and a navy, but a nation. The speech caused a great sensation. Naturally enough, it aroused bitter indignation on the other side of the Atlantic, whilst the sympathisers with the North in this country felt deeply aggrieved by it. In subsequent years Mr. Gladstone publicly made amends to the great Republic for his error of judgment, but it was a long time before he was allowed to forget it.

I had no misadventure in reporting this memorable speech. It was the first occasion on which I had ever heard Mr. Gladstone speak, and it is even fresher in my recollection than my last sight of him shortly before his death. I can recall his tall, upright figure, the handsome, open countenance, as mobile as an actor's, the flashing eye that in moments of passion lit up so wonderfully, the crop of waving brown-black hair. I have seldom seen a finer-looking man. I hear once again the beautiful voice, so sonorous, so varied in tone, so emphatic in accent. To the boy of twenty a first sight of this great historic figure was a revelation. He seemed different from everybody else, almost a being from another world. I suppose that my admiration of Mr. Gladstone, which some have considered idolatrous, is to be dated from that hour. Thirty years afterwards I still regarded him as my political leader, and as the chief of men.

On the second day of his visit to Newcastle, Mr. Gladstone, as the guest of the River Tyne Commissioners, steamed down the Tyne from Newcastle to its mouth. His progress was like that of a conqueror returning from the wars. The firing of cannon, the waving of flags, the cheering of thousands, acclaimed his passage down the coaly stream. An immense train of steamers and barges, all gaily decorated, followed in his wake. At different points of the journey his steamer was brought to a standstill, in order that addresses of welcome might be presented to him by different public bodies. He made speeches without end in reply. I think I reported eight of them myself. It was evident that he was deeply impressed by this demonstration, and I have always held that

it was on that fateful day in October, 1862, that he discovered that his unpopularity with the upper classes was more than counterbalanced by his hold upon the affections of the people. As we were returning to Newcastle in the evening, I happened to be standing near Mrs. Gladstone, and she entered into conversation with me. It was the first time that I had ever seen her. "I think this has been the happiest day of my life," she said to me, with that exuberant enthusiasm in the cause of her illustrious husband which was one of the sweetest and noblest traits of her character. Exactly twenty years later, on October 8th, 1882, I sat beside Mrs. Gladstone at dinner at Leeds, where the Prime Minister had just been making a series of memorable speeches, and had received a welcome which even surpassed that at Newcastle in 1862. I recalled our meeting on the steamboat twenty years before, and her face kindled with an expression of delight. "Ah," she said, "I shall never forget that day! It was the first time, you know, that *he* was received as he deserved to be."

My reporting experiences at Newcastle were as varied as those of most journalists. One day I would be listening to a bishop's charge; the next, in some beautiful spot in the valley of the North Tyne, I would be professing to criticise shorthorns at a cattle show, and on the third day it might be my misfortune to have to be present at an execution. Colliery accidents, boat races (for which the Tyne has long been famous), performances at the theatre—all these came within the scope of my duty. It was admirable training, and has turned out many a good journalist. Always to be on the alert, so that no important item of news should

be missed by my paper; always to be ready to reel off a column of readable "copy" on any subject whatever; always to be prepared for any duty that might turn up—these were among the necessary qualifications for my post. Then, as the *Journal* was short-handed, it sometimes fell to my lot to undertake tasks which usually lie outside the reporter's sphere. Sometimes I had to take a turn at sub-editing, and sometimes I had even to write a leader. My first attempt at leader-writing for the *Journal* was on a momentous occasion—the death of the Prince Consort. This was an event which for a time lightened my duties considerably. All public festivities were suspended; meetings of every kind were put off, and for a space of some weeks the country was spared the infliction of reading reports of speeches.

It was just about a month after the death of the Prince Consort that the most notable incident connected with my career as a reporter at Newcastle occurred. This was the terrible disaster at the Hartley New Pit, a colliery some fifteen miles from Newcastle, near the bleak Northumberland coast. The accident was of a peculiar character, and it excited an extraordinary amount of public interest. Up to that time it had been lawful to work coal mines with a single shaft, so that there was only one possible mode of egress for the men at work in the pit. Hartley was one of these single shaft collieries, and on the morning of Thursday, January 17th, 1862, more than two hundred men and boys were suddenly made prisoners in the workings by the blocking of this shaft. The beam of a pumping engine erected directly over the mouth of the pit broke,

and one half of the beam—a piece of metal weighing some fifteen tons—fell down the shaft. It tore down the sides in its descent, and finally lodged at a point above the seam in which the men were working, with an immense mass of *débris* from the shaft walls piled above it.

The suspense of the relatives of the buried men and boys was terrible, and the whole civilised world seemed to share their emotion. After the accident had occurred, signals had been exchanged between the buried men and those at the surface, but none could tell how long the former might be able to sustain life in the vitiated atmosphere of the mine, when ventilation was no longer possible. I reached Hartley a few hours after the breaking of the beam, and in the hand-to-hand encounter with death at that forlorn and desolate spot I first became acquainted at close quarters with the tragic realities of life. For a full week in that bitter January weather I may be said to have lived on the pit platform. From ten in the morning till long after midnight I remained there, writing hourly despatches for my paper; then I drove to Newcastle, a cold, dark journey of a couple of hours, and scribbled my latest bulletin at the *Journal* office. This done, I lay down on a pile of newspapers in the rat-haunted office, and snatched a few hours' sleep before returning to the post of duty. But some nights it was impossible to leave the mouth of the pit even for a moment, for none could tell when the captives might be reached; so I sat with the doctors, the mining engineers, and one or two colleagues before the fire which gave us a partial warmth, though it did not shield us from the pitiless winds and the drifting sleet

and snow, which often effaced my "copy" more quickly than I wrote it. It was a time of hardship and endurance, not soon to be forgotten; but it was also a time which tested to the full the capacities, both mental and physical, of the journalist, and I at least derived nothing but benefit from that rough experience.

For a full week the work of re-opening the shaft went on by night and day, and there were wives and parents who during all that week hardly left the neighbourhood of the pit for a single hour. The task of re-opening the shaft was one of extreme peril. The men had to be lowered to their work at the end of a rope in which a loop had been made, which was secured round their bodies. The two chief dangers they had to face were the continual falling in of the sides of the shaft and the presence of noxious gases. They never flinched, however, and I witnessed on that dreary pit platform at Hartley that which I have always considered the bravest deed I ever saw. I and a handful of watchers were dozing round the open fire in the early hours of a bitter winter morning, just one week after the accident had happened, when we were suddenly aroused by an urgent signal from the shaft, evidently coming from the men working far below. We thought that the imprisoned miners had been reached, and eagerly we waited till the first messenger was brought to the surface. Alas! when he was raised to the mouth of the shaft we saw that he was one of the sinkers, and was unconscious—apparently, indeed, dead. Whilst the doctor in attendance was seeking to restore him, other men were brought up, nearly all in the same condition, until the whole of the sinkers who had been engaged

in their perilous task of mercy were laid in a row, pallid and unconscious, at our feet. The truth was at once apparent. The obstacle which had so long blocked the shaft had at last been removed, but a deadly gas—carbon dioxide—had at once ascended from the long-sealed workings, and we knew that the men we had been trying to save must be beyond the reach of help.

One of the sinkers who lay insensible on the platform was the son of the master-sinker, Coulson by name. I saw Coulson, when he realised what had happened, stoop down and kiss the unconscious lips of his son, and then, without a word or a sign of hesitation, he calmly took his place in the loop, and ordered the attendants to lower him into the pit. None dared say him nay, for there was still a last faint possibility that some one among the imprisoned miners might yet be alive. But it seemed to us on the pit-heap that the brave old man was going to certain death, and we never expected to see him alive again when he vanished from our sight. He did come back alive, however, and brought with him the terrible story of what he had seen. All the two hundred imprisoned colliers were dead. They were found sitting in long rows in the workings adjoining the shaft. Most had their heads buried in their hands, but here and there friends sat with intertwined arms, whilst fathers whose boys were working with them in the pit were in every case found with their lads clasped in their arms. They had all died very peacefully, and certainly not more than forty-eight hours after the closing of the shaft. One of the over-men had kept a diary of events. It told how some had succumbed to the

fatal atmosphere before others, and how, in the depths of the mine, a prayer-meeting had been held, and "Brother Tibbs" had "exhorted" his fellow-sufferers. There was something noble in this peaceful ending of a life of toil and danger. It affected the whole country profoundly. It drew from the Queen, who herself had been but a few weeks a widow, a letter of sympathy which touched the heart of the nation. A subscription was raised for the widows and orphans on so liberal a scale that all their wants were more than provided for. I had myself the pleasure of starting a subscription for Coulson and his heroic fellow-workers in the shaft, which realised a handsome sum; and I was present in the Town Hall at Newcastle when they were decorated with the medals they deserved so well.

Incidentally, this great disaster affected my own career. My accounts, written at the pit mouth from day to day, had been widely quoted and read throughout the country, and it was desired that I should reprint them. They were accordingly republished for the benefit of the fund raised for the sinkers, and had a large sale. As my name appeared on the reprint, it gave me a certain passing renown in journalistic circles, and materially aided me in my future professional life.

Charles Dickens, as I have already mentioned, came to Newcastle to read from his works during my reportership on the *Journal*. I was, of course, an enthusiastic admirer of his, though, as I have said, Thackeray was my chief hero as a novelist. I have already spoken of the boyish eulogium which I wrote upon Dickens in anticipation of his visit.

The evening of his first reading was marked by

an incident which nearly cut short my career. The hall where he was to read was full to the door when I arrived. With three ladies—who, like myself, had come too late—I was in danger of being excluded. A form was, however, brought in, and placed directly beneath the platform, so close to it that we had to incline our heads at an uncomfortable angle in order to see the reader's face. Suddenly, before the reading had proceeded very far, the heavy proscenium, which Dickens always carried about with him for the purpose of his readings, fell with a crash over me and the three ladies on the form. We were so near that the top of the proscenium happily fell beyond us, and we escaped with a severe fright. Years afterwards I was amused to read, in one of the published letters of Dickens to his sister-in-law, an account of this accident, in which the novelist told how his gasman had said afterwards: "The master stood it like a brick." But it was not upon the master, but upon me and the three ladies that that terrible proscenium suddenly descended.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM REPORTER TO EDITOR.

First Visit to London—The Capital in 1862—Acquaintance with Sothern—Bursting of the Bradfield Reservoir—Attendance at Public Executions and at Floggings—Assuming the Editorship of the *Preston Guardian*—Political and Literary Influences—Great Speeches by Gladstone and Bright—Bright's Contempt for Palmerston—Robertson Gladstone Defends his Brother—Death of Abraham Lincoln—Meeting with his Granddaughter.

My first visit to London was on the occasion of the opening of the International Exhibition of 1862. The abominable system of Parliamentary trains, which made it necessary that the third-class passenger should rise in the middle of the night if he had to make a journey of any length, was then in force. I had, therefore, to start at five o'clock in the morning in order that I might reach London in the evening. I can still recall some of the emotions of that journey. London was to me the city of all cities—the one great goal of the journalist's ambition. I took short views of life even then, but my secret hope, ever present to my mind, was that I might some day attain a post in connection with the London Press. As the crawling train came into the southern counties—farther south than I had ever been in my life before—I remember counting the milestones on the road, and suffering all the emotions of the youth in "Locksley Hall" as he draws nearer to the world's central point.

My first impression, when I found myself in the cab that was to carry me to the Brompton Road, where lodgings had been engaged for me, was one of bewilderment at the length of the streets. I had studied a plan of London, and thought from it that I could, in case of need, find my way easily on foot from King's Cross to Brompton. Now I discovered, to my dismay, that streets which had seemed no longer than those with which I was familiar at Newcastle stretched to a length that was apparently interminable; whilst instead of one unbroken thoroughfare I was rattled in my cab through squares and streets innumerable, the names of none of which had I been able to read upon my plan. My next impression was one of delight at the fidelity with which little bits of street scenery had been portrayed by John Leech in *Punch*. In Newcastle we knew nothing of the kitchen area and the portico. I was filled with joy when, in passing through the Bloomsbury squares, I recognised, as I thought, the very houses, porticoes, and areas that Leech had made the background for his magnificent flunkeys and neat parlour-maids.

The streets of London were a good deal dingier and dirtier in 1862 than they are to-day, and they were certainly vastly noisier. The wooden pavement was unknown, and the roar of traffic in crowded thoroughfares was positively deafening. The window-boxes filled with the flowers that are now so common and so pretty a feature of the London summer were rare, as also were the coloured awnings and outside blinds now almost universal in the better-class of thoroughfares. Hyde Park was untidy and neglected, flower-beds being practically

unknown. The fine open space at Hyde Park Corner did not exist, and Piccadilly Circus was a circus really, and one of very narrow extent. But though far from possessing the magnificence of which it can now boast, London forty years ago had certain advantages over the city of to-day. There were no enormous piles of flats shutting out air and light from the streets, where both are so much needed. Few of the houses were more than four storeys in height, and the irregular architecture which then prevailed in Piccadilly—that most delightful of all the streets of the world—added to its attractiveness. But I must not be led into a digression upon London, a city so great and wonderful that a volume might easily be filled with the story of the associations it holds in my memory.

On the day after my arrival in town I was present at the State Opening of the Great Exhibition of 1862, the second—and apparently the last—of the international exhibitions held in London. Its interest was sensibly diminished by the fact that, in consequence of the death of the Prince Consort, neither the Queen nor any member of her family was present. The Duke of Cambridge, then in the prime of his manhood, took the leading part in the ceremony, and he had as his supporters Prince Frederick of Prussia, afterwards the Emperor Frederick, and the Prince of Hesse. We were not so clever in those days at arranging spectacles as we have since become, and, shortly before the hour fixed for the opening ceremony, a good deal of confusion still reigned upon the daïs set apart for the official notabilities. I was amused to see Lord Granville, who was, if I remember aright,

chairman of the Royal Commissioners, broom in hand, vigorously sweeping the carpet in front of the State chairs only a few moments before he had to rush off to receive the Duke of Cambridge. My most vivid recollection of the opening ceremony is the singing of Tennyson's fine ode, composed for the occasion. I can still recall the cadence of the first lines as they fell upon my ears.

A visit to the House of Commons, where I remember hearing speeches from Lord Palmerston and Sir George Cornewall Lewis, and where I gazed with longing eyes upon the occupants of the reporters' gallery, fills up my memories of this first sight of London. I might, indeed, have included in them some reference to Sothern, the actor, who was then at the height of his glory in the famous part of Lord Dundreary. But it was at Newcastle, not in London, that I actually made Sothern's acquaintance. No actor ever made a single character so famous as this part of Dundreary was made by Sothern. When he came to Newcastle on his first provincial tour I met him, and spent some pleasant evenings with him after the play. He was a man of refined speech and good social gifts. His besetting weakness, as I learned even then, was that addiction to practical jokes which, on more than one occasion in his subsequent career, involved him in unpleasant situations. One of his favourite tricks was to select some portly and self-important gentleman whom he saw passing along Piccadilly or Oxford Street, and, rushing up to him, to claim him as his dearly loved but long-lost uncle. The more strenuously the victim denied the relationship, the more eloquently pathetic and indignant became Sothern. A crowd always collected quickly,

and more than once the police were summoned to relieve the putative uncle from the presence of his unwelcome nephew.

Sothern told me that he was driven nearly mad during the long run of Lord Dundreary—or, rather, *Our American Cousin*, as the play was named—at the Haymarket. He found it almost impossible to repeat his own jokes before a house in which he invariably recognised many familiar faces. He was constantly driven to vary his "gag," in order to amuse these veterans of the theatre, and it was in a large measure to escape from them that he made his provincial tour. In one of his conversations on the stage with the fair Georgina, who was endeavouring to entrap him into marriage, he used sometimes, at the moment when the lady thought that he was about to propose, to put a question of a very different kind: "Can you wag your left ear?" I asked him one day what had made him invent so ridiculous a question as this. "Because I *can* wag my left ear," was his prompt response, and straightway I saw the organ in question flapping about like a sail in a breeze. The Theatre Royal at Newcastle in those days was under the management of Mr. E. D. Davis, a well-known figure in the provincial theatrical world. It was before the days of touring companies, and Mr. Davis was supported by an excellent body of artists, including his brother and his son Alfred, as well as his niece Emily Cross. I went to the theatre in the dignified capacity of dramatic critic; but neither then, nor at any subsequent period of my life, did I fall a victim to that passion for the drama to which so many Pressmen succumb. Indeed, I have a lively

recollection of incurring the well-merited reproof of pretty Miss Cross for having engaged in one of the stage boxes in a hot political discussion with another Newcastle journalist, Mr. Joseph Cowen to wit. Yet it was at Newcastle that I had my first and last association with dramatic authorship. One of the Davises had written a play which he had called *Wild Flowers*. He asked me to read the manuscript, and when I had done so I suggested that it should be entitled *The Marriage Contract*, an emendation which the author duly accepted.

My term of service on the Newcastle Press came to an end sooner than I had anticipated. The chief feature of my reporting experiences in 1863 was the meeting of the British Association in my native town. There was keen rivalry between the *Journal* and the *Chronicle*—Mr. Cowen's newspaper —with regard to the reporting of all local matters. Unfortunately for me, the *Chronicle* was a wealthy paper, and the *Journal* a very poor one. I had, therefore, to wage an unequal war with my richer rival. A British Association meeting throws a heavy strain upon the newspapers of the town in which it takes place. Half-a-dozen sections meet every day, and all must be reported ; whilst there are, in addition, evening meetings and social functions, the story of which must be told from day to day. Sir William Armstrong, then just coming into fame as a maker of guns, though long known to Newcastle as a great mechanical engineer and the inventor of the hydraulic crane, was the president of the meeting. This added to the pride which the people of Newcastle felt in the fact that their town had been chosen for the scene

of so distinguished a gathering. In those days local patriotism ran very high in the old town. We were intensely provincial, and our favourite belief was that Newcastle stood unrivalled among the cities of the earth. When any distinguished stranger came amongst us—as, for example, Mr. Gladstone, on the occasion to which I have already referred—we washed our face, and put on our best clothes in order to impress the visitor. We had something of the perfervid nature of the Scot in our characters, and rose to extraordinary heights of enthusiasm on very indifferent pretexts. It followed that when we had so distinguished a body as the British Association to receive as our guests, and when we had furnished in one of our own citizens the president of the meeting, we almost went out of our minds in our exultant delight. I do not know if Newcastle is still capable of these transports of enthusiasm. I rather think that the local patriotism which distinguished so many of our cities fifty years ago is now, in these days of incessant intercommunication, merged in the larger patriotism of the nation. Be this as it may, I must explain that my dissertation on the manner in which Newcastle received the British Association in 1863 is merely intended to account for the fact that, as a result of that meeting, I suffered from a serious illness, brought on by anxiety and overwork. I found that reporting, when you had to compete with a formidable rival possessing a staff three times as large as your own, was laborious, as well as exciting ; and having a desire to attempt literary work upon a higher level, I gave up my position as a reporter, and adopted instead the vocation of a leader-writer.

My last bit of work as a reporter for the *Newcastle Journal* was in describing the accident which happened at Bradfield, near Sheffield, in the spring of 1864. The dam of the great reservoir from which Sheffield drew its water supply burst, and a torrent of water, many feet in depth, and nearly a quarter of a mile in width, suddenly rushed down a narrow valley, and flooded the lower part of Sheffield. The tragic occurrence was subsequently described by Charles Reade in his novel, "Put Yourself in His Place." Reade was not an eye-witness of the scene that was presented after the flood had spent its force, but I can bear testimony to the fact that he described it accurately. Certainly it was a wonderful and terrible sight that was presented when I visited the place a few hours after the bursting of the dam. The streets of Sheffield were ploughed up to the depth of many feet; lamp-posts were twisted like wire, and many houses either stood tottering with one of their sides clean swept away, or lay a mere heap of ruins. Hundreds of lives were lost. A great battle could not have dealt death more freely than did this flood. Most of the victims were drowned in their beds, and it was a terrible sight to see the long rows of corpses, clad in night-dresses, that were laid out in the public building that had been hastily turned into a mortuary. I think, indeed, the horror of that spectacle surpassed even that of the scene at Hartley New Pit, when the victims of the accident there were disinterred.

The newspaper reporter has still, in the discharge of his duty, to see many strange and painful things, but he is now spared some of the most

trying sights to which he was exposed in my reporting days. Among these, none was so painful and so revolting as a public execution. I attended several executions during my connection with the Newcastle Press, and I was a witness in 1868 of the last public execution in England—that of Barrett, the Fenian, of whom I shall have more to say by-and-by. I am thankful to know that the necessity of attendance at these dreadful scenes is no longer imposed upon the journalist, and I feel a profound pity for those officials who are compelled by an imperative duty to be present at the private strangling of their fellow-creatures. It is true, however, that use hardens the heart and deadens the nerves. I remember how, on the first occasion of witnessing an execution, as I stood trembling at the foot of the scaffold on which the victim was about to appear, I noticed an old reporter, for whom I entertained a great personal respect, pacing up and down beside me, reading the New Testament. In the passion of horror and pity that filled my young heart, I concluded that my friend was seeking spiritual comfort in view of the event in which we were about to take part as spectators and recorders. I said something to him about the horror of the act we were shortly to witness. He looked up with a placid smile from his reading, and said gently—for he was essentially a gentle man—"Yes, very sad, very sad; but let us be thankful it isn't raining." And then he calmly returned to his daily reading of the Word. If even gentle hearts can thus grow callous, what must be the "moral effect" of an execution upon those who are already brutalised?

Another unpleasant sight which reporters are now spared is the flogging of garrotters. When the Act authorising this punishment was passed, provision was made that the representatives of the Press should be present when it was inflicted. More than once I have had to witness these floggings in the course of my ordinary duty. I confess that they did not affect me as they seemed to affect most of my colleagues. An execution, with the violent thrusting of a human soul into the unknown, moved me deeply; but the physical punishment of a ruffian who had himself inflicted atrocious suffering upon some innocent person seemed to be such well-deserved retribution that even the coward's shrieks for mercy made no impression upon my nerves; and yet I have seen reporters who could laugh and joke at an execution faint at the flogging of a garrotter. So differently are human beings constituted!

At the end of June, 1864, I left my native town, and went to Preston to undertake editorial duties in connection with the *Preston Guardian*—the leading Liberal paper in North Lancashire. It was a custom amongst journalists in those days always to give a farewell entertainment to a brother of the Press when he quitted a town where he had been engaged for any length of time. I was entertained at the usual complimentary dinner, and was made the recipient of a very handsome testimonial. I felt most unfeignedly that I had not deserved it, yet the possession of the gold watch and collection of standard books subscribed for out of the scanty earnings of my colleagues was a real comfort to me when, with a sad heart, I left the sacred shelter of my home and quitted

the town in which the whole of my life up to that moment had been spent. I reached Preston one summer evening as homesick as any lad could have been. I did not know the name of a single person in the town except that of the proprietor of the *Guardian*, Mr. Toulmin. I did not even know the name of an hotel at which to stay for the night. A porter at the railway station told me the name of the chief inn, and thither I repaired with my belongings.

An amusing experience befell me here, which, as it relates to a state of things that is now obsolete, I may recount. On the day after my arrival, having introduced myself at the *Guardian* office, and taken formal possession of my new post, I returned to my hotel in time for the daily dinner which the waitress had informed me was served at one o'clock. The coffee-room, when I entered it, was filled by commercial travellers, all hovering with hungry looks around the table that had been laid for dinner. They seemed relieved when I, as shy a youth as could anywhere be found, entered the room, and instantly seated themselves at the table. I looked round for some corner in which I might hide myself from what seemed to me to be their almost ferocious gaze, and was filled with alarm when I found that the only seat left vacant was that at the head of the table. Instinctively I shrank from so conspicuous a place, and as I moved away the hungry company seemed to glare at me more fiercely than ever. A waitress approached me, and saying, "You are president of the day, sir," motioned me to the vacant seat at the head of the board. I do not think I was ever more miserable or more

frightened in my life than when, under her imperious direction, I took my seat and met the gaze of a dozen hungry men: on the sideboard stood the soup tureens, the waiting-maids beside them, but not a cover was lifted or a motion made, and dead silence filled the room. I sat in blushing bewilderment, waiting for the dinner to be served. Suddenly, from the other end of the table, a harsh voice issued from the lips of a burly, red-faced man. "Mr. President, if you are a Christian, you'll perhaps be good enough to say grace, and let us get to our dinner, which we want very badly." I managed to stammer forth the formula of my childhood, and thought the worst was over. Not a bit of it. No sooner had the soup been audibly consumed than the hated voice from the foot of the table again assailed me. "Mr. President, I really don't know what you mean by neglecting your duties in this way, but let me tell you that this is not a company of teetotallers." "Ask them what wine they would like," whispered the waitress behind me, who saw my plight, and who evidently pitied it, for she added, "Don't let that nasty man at the other end of the table bully you." But I was incapable of maintaining the deception in which I had been innocently involved, and, taking my courage in both hands, I frankly told the company that I was not a commercial traveller, had never in my life dined at a commercial table, and, as I knew nothing of the usages of such a place, would beg the gentleman at the other end of the table to take upon himself the duties of president. There was a burst of laughter from the majority of the diners, and good-humour was instantly restored. My *vis-à-vis*, who was addressed

as "Mr. Vice," was, indeed, somewhat grumpy; but I had won the goodwill of the others, and was allowed to look on, a silent spectator, whilst the many mystic rites and usages which distinguished the "commercial table" of that epoch were duly celebrated. Strange to say, that was not only my first but my last experience of the kind, and now I imagine that the old customs of the road—the wine-drinking, the speech-making, the toasts, and the graces before and after meat—are all things of the past.

My editorial career at Preston began with a somewhat painful and even dramatic episode. I had returned to the office, after my dinner with the commercial travellers, in order to attend to my duties for the day. The *Guardian* was published twice a week—on Wednesday and Saturday. This was Tuesday afternoon. The proprietor had informed me that he was already provided with a leading article for Wednesday's publication, and my duties were therefore confined to the sub-editing of the news and the writing of a few editorial paragraphs. Suddenly Mr. Toulmin entered my room, and, without uttering a word, placed a telegram on the desk before me. It consisted of these words, still imprinted on my memory: "Washington Wilkes died suddenly last night while addressing a public meeting." I knew Mr. Wilkes by name as a Radical journalist of considerable ability, who wrote regularly for the *Morning Star*. Accordingly I expressed my regret on hearing of his death. "Yes," said Mr. Toulmin, bluntly; "that's all very well, but now you'll have to write the leader for to-morrow, for Wilkes was to have written it." Under these startling circumstances

I penned my first leading article for the *Preston Guardian*. Though I thus stepped into the shoes of a dead man, I fear that I can hardly have filled them; but this was, on the whole, not to be wondered at.

Mr. Toulmin, my new employer, was a man of marked character. Long before my business connection with him ceased, I learned to regard him with genuine respect and liking, and these feelings I entertained for him to the day of his death. But his somewhat rough exterior was not altogether prepossessing, and when I came to him first as a raw lad, shy, sensitive, and intolerant of manners that were foreign to my own, I must frankly confess that I felt repelled by him. Besides, I quickly discovered that I should have to fight my own battles if I wished to preserve my professional rights and dignity. I had been engaged as editor and sub-editor of the *Guardian*, and as it was my first editorship, it need hardly be said that I valued my position highly. Mr. Toulmin, I subsequently found, had a reputation for getting all he could out of the members of his staff without much regard to the customs of journalism. Thus, I had scarcely finished the article which would have been written by Washington Wilkes but for his sudden death, when Mr. Toulmin, coming into my room, expressed his warm satisfaction at the quickness with which I had turned out my work; then, with an almost paternal smile upon his face, he laid before me some pages of manuscript, and in an insinuating voice said: "Would you mind keeping your eye upon this whilst I run over this proof?" In an instant I grasped his meaning. I had been engaged

as editor, and he proposed to fill up my spare time by employing me as a proof-reader. For a moment I was almost apoplectic with indignation at what I regarded as an outrage upon my dignity. To this day I am thankful that I controlled my temper, but I am not less thankful that I had the courage—and it required some courage—to say to him, with a smile as insinuating as his own: "I should have been delighted, but unfortunately I have an engagement out of doors." And thereupon I left the room, triumphant.

Never again did Mr. Toulmin invite me to assist him in reading a proof, and long afterwards he made frank admission to me of the fact that this incident proved that I was "not going to be put upon." Very soon I found that he was not only a kind-hearted but a very able man. He had begun life, at the age of six, in a cotton factory. The statement to-day is hardly credible, but such is the fact. In those cruel times, when no Lord Ashley had as yet arisen to open the door of the workman's prison-house and set the children free, this poor child had been shut up from six in the morning till six at night in the fetid atmosphere of a cotton-mill. God knows what the economic value of such a weakling's labour may have been! One would think that a South Carolina planter would have been wiser than to work his "stock" at such an age. Be this as it may, my friend had passed through this terrible apprenticeship to toil—always hungry, always tired; and had not only survived it, but emerged from it a man. When I knew him he could talk calmly of the horrors of his childhood, but there was an undercurrent of bitterness in his reference to those

times which one could understand and respect. He was an ardent and convinced Liberal, and I think that I owe more to his teaching for the character of my own political views than I owe to anybody else.

When I went to Lancashire in 1864 the terrible effects of the cotton famine were everywhere to be seen. History has done justice to the noble fortitude with which the operatives of Lancashire "clemmed" (starved) in silence during that awful time. Never shall I forget the pale, pinched faces of the men and women as they walked to and from their daily labour. The worst of the struggle was over, but hundreds of great mills were still closed, and those which were open only ran half-time. The working classes in Lancashire, as in most places, were on the side of the North in the American Civil War, and not even the sufferings which that war caused them, made them abate their opposition to the slave-holding South. But in Lancashire, as elsewhere, the upper classes—with the exception of the few who followed the noble leadership of John Bright—were enthusiasts on the side of the South, and, if they had dared, would have urged English intervention on behalf of the Confederate States. There was thus a strong and marked difference of opinion between the upper and the lower classes in Lancashire, as elsewhere. The great question in domestic politics was that of Parliamentary reform. Advanced Liberals believed that if only the franchise was enlarged, and the working-man admitted within the pale, Liberal principles and ideas would henceforward triumph permanently in our national politics, and they

were, consequently, eager to bring about this great constitutional change. Tories also believed that this would be the effect of the enlargement of the franchise, and they naturally opposed it vehemently. Neither party foresaw that the elements common to human nature everywhere would influence the course of politics just as fully after the working men had been admitted within the pale of the Constitution as before, and that we should find even amongst the lower orders the same differences between Liberals and Conservatives as prevailed in the middle class.

The sober Whiggish turn of mind which I had inherited from my father influenced me greatly in those days. Like the rest of the world, I believed that to admit the working classes to the franchise would be to give democracy a free rein, and to bring about changes, both social and political, of an extreme kind. Many of the changes then suggested did not seem to me to be wise. For this reason I could not enter as heartily as I might otherwise have done into the demand for Parliamentary reform. To go slowly, I thought, would be to go safely. From this Laodicean frame of mind I was rescued by Mr. Toulmin. It was not only that he could speak of the dark days at the beginning of the century, and of the inequality and injustice which then prevailed under Tory rule in England; he was able also to point out the contrast between the unselfish and heroic conduct of the Lancashire operatives with regard to the American Civil War, and that of their superiors, in whose hands the political destinies of the country rested. He was in the habit of enforcing his broad and sensible arguments on the subject of Parlia-

mentary reform by means of a quaint little diagram, which he was continually presenting to those with whom he engaged in argument. "Look at this," he would say, pointing to an inverted pyramid, "that is the British constitution as it is at present. Does it not strike you as being rather top-heavy, and not unlikely to topple over in a storm? Now look at this," and he placed the pyramid on its proper base. "That is what I want to see, and you'll agree with me it's a great deal safer than the other way." I thought of Tennyson's words: "Broad-based upon her people's will," and felt that there was more in the rude little diagram than in many subtle and learned arguments.

It was not only from my intercourse with Mr. Toulmin that I derived mental profit in those days. I was always a rapid worker, and I speedily found that two days and a half in each week sufficed to enable me to discharge my duties at the *Guardian* office. The ample leisure which I thus enjoyed I devoted to reading, and in my lonely lodgings I spent hours each day in study. As I look back upon that time I feel again stealing over me like a vivifying flood the influence of Carlyle, under the spell of whose teaching and inspiration I then practically came for the first time. The companions of my solitude in those days were at least not ignoble ones. Carlyle, Browning—not yet the victim of the Browning Society—Thackeray, and most of our great historians, were always by my side, and my mind gradually expanded as it absorbed their words and thoughts. In one respect Preston has always seemed to me to be unique among English towns. The centre of the town, if I may commit a bull, lay at a point on its circumference.

The Town Hall, the parish church, the leading business thoroughfare, the railway station, and the *Guardian* office were all close to the river Ribble, separated from it only by the beautiful Avenham Park, where the residences of the local aristocracy were to be found. All the industrial part of the town, and the houses of the operatives, lay farther away from the river. Across the river there was nothing but open country. My modest lodgings in Regent Street were at the same time within three minutes' walk of the *Guardian* office and of the old wooden bridge that crossed the Ribble. Thus I could escape almost directly from the town into the open country, and many were the hours I spent in delightful solitary rambles through the lanes and fields of rural Lancashire. It is a good thing for a young man to have time for solitary thinking, and no one who is worth his salt can enjoy the kind of solitude which fell to my lot at Preston without gaining by it. If I went there a boy, I left the place, after my eighteen months of editorship, a man.

Of my newspaper experiences at Preston there is not much to record. Two notable speeches that I heard and reported—although I would not read proofs I was quite willing to oblige Mr. Toulmin by keeping up my practice as a shorthand writer—recur to me. One was a speech made in 1865 by Mr. Gladstone at Manchester. The chief memory it has left with me is of the touching and stately eloquence with which he told his audience that he felt that his own life's work was drawing to a close. Of the men with whom he had entered upon public life, he declared the majority had passed away, and that fact reminded him that

he could not reasonably expect that his own time could be much further prolonged. No one who heard him could have imagined that thirty years of public service still lay before the speaker. The other speech was still more notable, for it introduced me for the first time to the greatest of all the orators of the nineteenth century, John Bright. Mr. Bright's speech, which was delivered at Blackburn, promised to be of peculiar interest, inasmuch as he made it only a few days after the death of Lord Palmerston, in October, 1865. Everybody was curious to know what the great Liberal would say of the man whose policy he had so often opposed, and with whom he had so often crossed swords on the floor of Parliament. I went to Blackburn as curious as anybody else. Bright made a long speech, and from beginning to end he never mentioned the name of Palmerston. Years afterwards, in a spirit, I fear, slightly tinged with malice, I would sometimes supply that notable omission by naming Palmerston to Mr. Bright. The effect was always the same, and always electrical. "Palmerston!" he would cry. "The man who involved us in the crime of the Crimean War!" And then he would break off with an angry toss of his leonine head; but the accents of immeasurable scorn filled the hiatus in his speech.

In after years I became what I still remain —an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Bright's oratory. I hope to say something on a later page on this subject. Here I need only note the fact that his first speech disappointed me. Indeed, men were usually disappointed when they heard him for the first time. They went expecting

to hear an orator full of sound and fury. They were amazed by the reserve—one might almost say the repose—of his style. Of gesture he made absolutely no use. He never let his magnificent voice rise above a certain pitch; he never poured out his words in a tumultuous torrent; he was always deliberate and measured in his utterances, and it was only as you grew accustomed to him that you noted those wonderful inflections of the voice which expressed so clearly the emotions of the orator.

In 1865 the country was much agitated on the question of the cattle plague. It was a question that particularly affected Cheshire and the rural parts of Lancashire. The action taken by the Government, of which Mr. Gladstone was a prominent member, was strongly opposed by the representatives of the agricultural interest. A county meeting was held at Preston to consider the subject and to denounce the Ministry. If I remember aright, the Earl of Derby, the famous "Rupert of debate," was in the chair, and he was surrounded by half the magnates of Lancashire. It was a notable and imposing gathering. One titled speaker after another got up and abused Ministers, and it was notable that Mr. Gladstone fell in for the hottest measure of abuse. When some resolution was about to be put a man seated in the body of the hall got up and asked if he might say a few words. He was a tall, thick-set person, and his dress was so plain that most of us took him for a farmer, if not a farm-labourer. The meeting, which was enjoying the eloquence of earls and aristocrats of every degree, turned with anger upon the unknown intruder, and shouted

"Name, name!" with all its might. "My name is Gladstone," said the stranger, in a clear and powerful voice. Everybody burst into a roar of laughter. It seemed so curious that immediately after listening to unmeasured vituperation of *the* Gladstone, this humble person who had obtruded himself unexpectedly upon the scene should happen to be of the same name. But before the laughter had subsided Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, who was on the platform, shouted out the explanation of the mystery. "Mr. Robertson Gladstone, of Liverpool." It was the brother of the much-hated Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had gone to the meeting to defend his illustrious relative; and defend him he did, with so much force and eloquence that he not only made some of the noble speakers look rather foolish, but convinced one, at least, who heard him that if he had adopted a Parliamentary career, he too might have been one of the great figures of the House of Commons.

As I look back upon my editorial experiences during the year and a half that I spent at Preston, the salient questions which stand out in my recollection are the war between Denmark and the Austro-Prussian allies, in which this country was so nearly involved, and the concluding struggles in the American Civil War, which may be said to have had their culmination in the tragical assassination of Lincoln. It may seem a strange thing to say, and yet I believe that Lincoln's cruel death did more to hasten the return of peace and goodwill, not only in the United States, but all over the world, after the close of the war, than anything else could have done. It is certain that it produced a remarkable effect in England. The

"classes" in England were, as I have said, almost unanimously opposed to the North, and there was no single person engaged in the great struggle whom they more persistently misunderstood and misrepresented than Abraham Lincoln. Even now I feel a sense of shame as I recall the abuse which was showered upon that great man at the time when he was leading his country through the most terrible crisis in her history. But his death, coming as it did in the moment of victory, and also at the moment when he had shown that he knew how to be moderate and magnanimous in victory, opened the eyes of the world, and showed him, even to those Englishmen who had hated him, in his true colours—one of the wisest and noblest men of our time.

This revelation of the blunder which "the classes" had committed in their estimate of Lincoln had an even greater effect in softening the asperities which the war left behind it than had the exposure of the egregious miscalculations of English statesmen as to the comparative military strength of North and South. One must not blame Englishmen too severely, however, for their lack of appreciation of Lincoln. It is doubtful if even now he is appreciated at his true worth by Americans themselves. Some years ago I had the privilege of taking in to dinner a charming young lady who was Lincoln's direct descendant. I said to her, "You can hardly understand how pleased I am to have met you. There is scarcely any man whose name is familiar to me whom I honour as I honour the memory of your grandfather." The young lady opened her eyes in innocent amazement, and con-

fessed subsequently that she had been very much surprised by my little speech. "At home they never say anything about grandpapa." Lowell, however, has said something about him which will live for ever in the elegiac poetry of the world.

My stay at Preston came to an end in January, 1866. I had become engaged whilst staying there, and, feeling stronger in health, was anxious to obtain a more active position than the editorship of a newspaper published only twice a week. My wishes were realised when I received an offer from the proprietors of the *Leeds Mercury* of a position on that journal, which had long been one of the most important of provincial newspapers. I accepted the offer, and left Preston at the beginning of 1866 with feelings of nothing but goodwill and respect for my old chief, Mr. Toulmin.

CHAPTER V.

WORK ON THE *LEEDS MERCURY*.

My New Duties—Betrothal—The Writing of Leading Articles—The Founder of the *Leeds Mercury*—Edward Baines the Second—Thomas Blackburn Baines—Patriotic Nonconformists—Another Colliery Explosion: A Story of Heroism—An Abortive Fenian Raid at Chester—Reminiscences of the Prince of Wales's Visits to Yorkshire—Mr. Bright and the Reform Demonstrations of 1866—The Closing Speech at St. James's Hall—The Tribune of the People Vindicates the Queen.

I DID not know, when I arrived in Leeds one wintry day in the beginning of 1866, how long my connection with that town was to last, and how closely I was to become associated with its public life. Beyond one or two members of the *Mercury* staff, I knew nobody in Leeds, so that once more I found myself amongst strangers. But whereas at Preston I had remained a stranger and a wayfarer during the whole period of my sojourn in the place, I had not been long in Leeds before I began to feel that I had found a second home. This was, no doubt, due in part to the fact that old friends of mine were already employed on the *Mercury* staff, through whom I speedily made a number of acquaintances among the townspeople. But I think that the sense of being at home which I acquired so soon was chiefly due to the character of the inhabitants of Leeds. Whatever may be the case now, at that time the Leeds people were typical representatives of the best characteristics of York-

shire. They were frank, outspoken, warm-hearted, and hospitable. They were not, indeed, so refined in speech as they might have been, and to the stranger their blunt utterances were at times rather disconcerting. They criticised one's work freely, and never hesitated to say when they did not like it. They had strong prejudices and prepossessions, to both of which they gave free expression. But if they never hesitated to criticise, they were just as ready, when they were pleased, to utter words of praise and encouragement; and it was not long before I had the gratification of finding that my humble efforts on the *Leeds Mercury* had made for me many friends whom I did not know in the flesh.

Next to the delight of a first appearance in print, there is nothing that brings so much joy to the heart of a young writer as the discovery that something which he has written has won the sympathy and secured for him the friendly approval of some unknown reader. It is in this that there lies, after all, the highest reward of the journalist. No honours, no money, no fame can ever satisfy him as does the knowledge that by means of his pen he is influencing the thoughts, and winning the affections, of some at least of that vast unknown public whom it is his duty to address. A sheet of paper is but a flimsy thing, yet, as a rule, when used by the journalist it cuts off the electric current of sympathy which passes between speaker and auditor when they are visible to each other. The discovery that it may sometimes be a conductor, instead of an obstruction, to the current warms the heart of a young writer in a wonderful fashion, and is the best stimulus that he can have in the

pursuit of his profession. To my dying day I shall think of Leeds with pleasure and gratitude, in remembrance of the fact that it was there that I first enjoyed this delightful experience.

My duties on the *Leeds Mercury* were, in the first instance, both varied and modest. I had to superintend the work of the reporting staff, taking part myself, when necessary, in the reporting of large meetings and important speeches. I had to do all the descriptive work of the journal, and in those days more importance was attached to the work of the descriptive writer than appears to be the case at present. Russell, of the *Times*, the illustrious "pen of the war," furnished the model for descriptive journalism in the 'sixties. There was none of that slap-dash statement of bare facts, embellished by the more or less impertinent personal impressions and opinions of the reporter, to which we have become accustomed in recent times. It was expected that a descriptive article should be in the nature of an essay, and that it should actually describe, more or less vividly, the scene with which it dealt. If anyone cares to search the files of our leading newspapers between 1860 and 1870, he will come upon some pieces of descriptive writing of astonishing literary merit.

In addition to acting as descriptive writer, I had, when required, to contribute leading articles to the *Mercury*. At first I did this at rare intervals. It was an innovation for anyone connected with the reporting staff to contribute to the leading columns, and I remember the alarm and indignation of the older members of the staff when they learned that work of this character was to be entrusted

to me. But I had practised leader-writing at Preston ; I liked it (though my preference was for descriptive writing), and it was not long before I found that I had got into the regular leader-writer's stride. I was barely four-and-twenty, and I had, therefore, a consuming sense of the value of my lucubrations and the importance of my opinions. It is emphatically true, as Sir William Harcourt once wrote to me, that "Youth is the age of Wegotism." When I wielded that magnificent editorial "we," and was able to back up my own crude ideas with all the authority of a great daily newspaper, I felt that I, too, was somebody in the world of affairs, and that though I might live in modest lodgings and possess but narrow means, I was not without a distinct place and influence of my own in the great commonwealth. Such are the illusions of the youthful leader-writer—foolish, perhaps, but not ignoble.

Some of my early leaders pleased the proprietors of the paper, one of whom was also the editor. It was arranged that I was to contribute regularly the chief article for Monday's paper. Now, as I have said, I had become engaged, and my cousin, Miss Kate Thornton, to whom I was betrothed, lived at Stockport, at a distance of more than two hours from Leeds. I had been in the habit of visiting Stockport almost every Saturday, returning to my duties on Monday morning. This leader-writing for Monday's paper threatened to interfere with this arrangement. Fortunately for me, the proprietors of the *Mercury*—of whom I shall have more to say presently—had a great reverence for Sunday. The *Leeds Mercury*, indeed, had not become a daily paper until long after

this change in its character was expected by the public, simply because an ordinary daily newspaper entailed a certain amount of Sunday work upon those engaged in producing it. It was not until the proprietors had satisfied themselves that it would be possible to produce a Monday morning's newspaper, and at the same time to keep the office closed from midnight on Saturday till midnight on Sunday, that they resolved to publish daily. The arrangement was costly; it was vastly inconvenient to everybody concerned. I am afraid that it did not conduce to the keeping of the Sabbath, seeing that the compositors, who were not allowed to enter the office until midnight of that day, were tempted to spend an hour or two in some public-house before commencing their belated work. But with all its drawbacks, the plan had at least the advantage of keeping the office doors shut for the whole of the twenty-four sacred hours, and thus the appearance of evil, if not the evil itself, was avoided. As a consequence of this system, the greater part of Monday's paper had to be set on Saturday, and the leader, in particular, was always furnished to the printers on that day. So far, therefore, there was nothing to prevent my writing the Monday's leader, and still paying my usual weekly visit to Stockport. All that was necessary was that the editor should give me my subject early enough on Saturday morning.

This, however, was what I could not induce him to do. He was supposed to be at the office shortly after eleven o'clock, and my train for Stockport did not leave until half-past one. If the editor had been punctual, and if he had

given me my subject at once, I should have had ample time in which to write my leader. But unfortunately he was not punctual, and too often when he came he was occupied with other business, whilst I hung about miserably counting the minutes until I was summoned to his presence. Then, when at last I had received my subject, or had got leave to write upon some topic suggested by myself, I hurried to the sub-editor's room, and, sitting at a corner of a table upon which I laid my watch, dashed off my precious article at the top of my speed. When I began my practice as a leader-writer I took from an hour and a half to two hours to write my fifteen hundred words; but, under the pressure of that terrible half-past one o'clock train, I gradually improved my pace, until at last, if I took more than an hour in the production of an article, I felt dissatisfied. Mere speed in writing is a very small accomplishment. It is not necessarily a virtue, and it may even be a vice; but it is undoubtedly an accomplishment that I possess. In later days my regular time for turning out an article of the length I have named was from forty to fifty minutes. I could write my leaders with people talking around me, and felt no difficulty in joining in the conversation. I am told that many journalists regard it as incredible that an article of fifteen hundred words could be written in from forty to fifty minutes. All I can say is that it is a fact, and I attribute this speed in writing to the pressure of that half-past one o'clock train on Saturdays in the good old days of my first residence in Leeds.

The story of the *Leeds Mercury* is an honourable one in the annals of English journalism. It was

first established, if I remember aright, in the year 1718. In the editor's room at Leeds a file of the paper is preserved, dating from the year 1727. This file is complete for more than 170 years, with one melancholy exception. In the volume for 1745 the numbers of the paper published during the second Jacobite Rising are omitted. But in spite of this omission, these volumes, extending over so long a period, are of immense value and interest. In its earliest days the *Mercury*, though published in a provincial town, sought to reproduce in its columns not so much the news of the locality as the humour of the Metropolis; and the very first leading article in the earliest volume preserved at Leeds bears the quaint title, "To the Ladies who affect showing their stockings."

Comparatively early in the Georgian era the *Mercury* became distinguished for the excellence of its news, both local and general. It was not, of course, a large newspaper in those days, but the four pages of which it consisted were full of meat. There was no descriptive reporting; but what could be more expressive than the announcement of a marriage in such terms as these:—"On Tuesday se'n-night, Squire Brown of Bumpkin Hall was married to Miss Matilda Midas of Halifax, a handsome young lady with ten thousand pounds to her dowry"? We are much more florid nowadays, but by no means so precise. The leader-writer did not spread himself abroad a hundred years ago. Indeed, soon after the *Leeds Mercury* gave up discussing the amiable weakness that it attributed to ladies with well-turned ankles, it ceased for a time to discuss anything at all. It was only in

the beginning of the nineteenth century that it resumed its leading articles. But what leading articles they were! Fine writing and redundancy of style were both discarded, and when the news of Waterloo arrived, the editor's comment upon the great epoch-making victory was expressed in a dozen lines. One sighs at the thought of the miles of "long primer" that would be expended if we had the opportunity of commenting upon such a theme to-day. Yet the twelve-line article in the *Leeds Mercury* of June, 1815, really said everything that was to the point on the subject with which it dealt.

It was in the year 1800 that the *Mercury* took that new stand in its history which was to place it in the front rank among English provincial journals. Three or four years earlier a young journeyman printer, named Edward Baines, had tramped across the moors which form the dividing line between Lancashire and Yorkshire, and after walking the whole distance from Preston to Leeds, had found employment in the small printing office in which the *Leeds Mercury* was produced. Edward Baines, the first, was undoubtedly a man of great ability and remarkable character. Very soon after he began his humble work as a compositor in Leeds he attracted the attention not only of his employer, but of some of the gentry of the town. He was seen to be a person of uncommon intelligence, strict integrity, and distinct political sagacity. The *Leeds Mercury*, at the close of the eighteenth century, was still a mere news-sheet, professing no opinions of its own, and consequently making no attempt to mould the opinions of its readers. The Whig party in the West Riding felt that they needed

an organ of their own to support their cause in that great district. Accordingly, they subscribed funds sufficient to acquire the *Mercury* and to provide capital for carrying it on, and they placed the paper in the hands of Edward Baines, the young printer who, but a few years previously, had made his first appearance in Yorkshire.

The trust they reposed in Mr. Baines was more than justified. Under his direction the *Mercury* became in a few years the leading journal in the north of England. The money that had been advanced to him for its purchase he speedily repaid, and by the time that Wellington was dealing his death-blow at French Imperialism, Edward Baines had made himself a power, not only in Leeds but in Yorkshire. I remember being told by very old men that when the news of Waterloo reached him a chair was taken out of his office in Briggate to the street, where an eager crowd had gathered. Mounting upon this chair, Mr. Baines read the despatch announcing the great victory to his enthusiastic fellow townsmen. An earnest Liberal, he fought by the side of the Liberal leaders both with his pen and his tongue during the long struggle for Parliamentary Reform, and he was in due time rewarded by being elected to represent Leeds in the House of Commons. His may fairly be described as an ideal career. He gained friends, influence, wealth, in the town he had entered as a penniless workman. But, better than all, he witnessed the triumph of nearly all the great political and social movements to which he had lent his powerful aid. Having represented his fellow-

townsmen in three successive Parliaments, he was honoured at his death, at a ripe age, in 1848, with a public funeral, which people in Leeds still recall as a unique demonstration of gratitude and esteem. In Yorkshire, where his career was better known than elsewhere, the name given to him by the generation that followed him was that of "the English Benjamin Franklin."

It was Mr. Baines's good fortune to leave behind him in his sons men who were worthy to succeed him. His eldest son, Matthew Talbot Baines, went to the Bar. After his father's death he entered Parliament, where he had a distinguished career, becoming eventually a Cabinet Minister under Lord Palmerston. He died at a comparatively early age, and it was well known to the initiated that, if he had not died thus young, it was the intention of the Government to propose him for the Speakership. The second son of the man who really founded the fortunes of the *Leeds Mercury* was, like his father, called Edward. He, too, attained distinction in the public service. From his youth he was his father's chief assistant in the editorship of the *Mercury*, and by his enterprise, sagacity, and fine abilities as a journalist he greatly extended the influence and reputation of the paper. As a boy he was present at the so-called Battle of Peterloo—the riot which took place at Manchester in 1819, when a political meeting was being held on the site of the present Free Trade Hall. Young Edward attended the meeting as a reporter for the *Mercury*. He observed everything that happened, and it was his evidence, given subsequently at Lancaster Assizes, that saved many innocent persons, who had been hunted down

by the cruel authorities of the day, from the punishment of transportation.

Edward Baines the second edited the *Mercury* down to 1859, when, on the death of his brother, he was chosen by his fellow-townsmen to succeed him as their representative in Parliament. He had there a most honourable career. He was, like his father, a Nonconformist, and he was also a strict teetotaller. When he entered the House of Commons there was only one other teetotaller in that body. A generous and cultured man, filled with enthusiasm for the public good, he succeeded during his Parliamentary career in winning the respect of the House, not only for himself personally, but for those Nonconformist and teetotal principles which Society, at that time, held in such low esteem. Strangely enough, this life-long advocate of temperance reform lost his seat in the General Election of 1874 through an outburst of teetotal fanaticism on the part of the advocates of the Permissive Bill. As he refused to vote for that measure, they ran an intemperate temperance advocate named Lees against him, and by doing so gave the seat to a local brewer. On his eightieth birthday, in 1880, he was knighted by Queen Victoria in recognition of his life-long devotion to the public service.

I am not, however, telling the story of the Baineses. I have not even referred to it at such length merely because I feel it to be an honourable and instructive chapter in English local history, but because it throws light upon the peculiar position and authority enjoyed by the *Leeds Mercury* when I first became connected with it in 1866. At that time, the son of the second Edward

Baines, Thomas Blackburn Baines, was editor of the paper, but his father took as active a part in its political direction as was consistent with the performance of his duties in Parliament. While Tom Baines edited the paper, the management was in the hands of his uncle, Frederick Baines, a man for whom I retain to this day something of the affection and respect of a son for a father. The paper, it will be seen, was thus the exclusive possession of the Baines family. It represented the views to which they had clung so tenaciously from the first. It was the great organ of Nonconformity in the English Press, and it was at the same time the advocate of a pronounced, though not an extreme, Liberalism. Its influence in the politics of Yorkshire was great, but no small part of that influence was due to the fact that the character of its conductors was known to the world, and that they were everywhere recognised as high-minded men, to whom journalism was something more than a trade. It was, indeed, a fortunate accident that brought me, whilst still in my youth, into intimate association with so high-minded a family.

They had their peculiarities. I have spoken already of their strict regard for the Sabbath. In other matters also they clung to many of the notions of the Puritans of an older generation. They never allowed the *Mercury* to publish betting news, or to pander to the national passion for gambling sport in any manner whatever. It would have been a good thing for the Englishman of to-day if, in this respect, their action, instead of being the exception, had been the rule among newspaper proprietors. The love of sport and of betting

which has had so bad an effect upon the national character during the last thirty years would have been greatly curbed if other newspaper proprietors had been as mindful of their responsibilities as were the Baineses. As it was, they met with no reward for the heavy sacrifice they made in refusing to cater for the tastes of the sport-loving populace.

Another peculiarity which marked the *Mercury* in those days, though founded upon equally admirable motives, was not so happy in its character as this exclusion of betting news. Edward Baines the second regarded the theatre from the old Nonconformist point of view. He looked upon it, as so many did, as being an agent for the demoralisation of the young, and he refused to allow any notice of it to appear in the columns of his paper. This naturally excited the anger and ridicule of a large section of the public, who were not insensible to the change that was gradually taking place on the British stage. But no arguments and no ridicule could move the sturdy old Nonconformist. I remember once pleading with him for some relaxation of this rule. He heard all I had to say with courteous attention, but when I had exhausted my stock of arguments he delivered himself as follows: "My dear Mr. Reid, I feel sure that you are quite sincere and conscientious in the views you hold, but you do not know the theatre as I do. I speak from personal experience when I say that both in itself and in its surroundings it is immoral and demoralising." I stared aghast at this utterance. I knew that I went to theatres occasionally, but until then I had believed that Edward Baines had never crossed the threshold

of a playhouse. He saw my look of surprise, and continued, "Yes, I am sorry to say that between the years 1819 and 1822 I attended the theatre frequently in London, and I can never forget the shocking immorality I witnessed both on the stage and among the audience." Dear, simple, high-principled, and most scrupulous soul! It was impossible to make way against his sixty-year-old memories.

But I must not omit to mention one characteristic of the proprietors of the *Mercury* which had a marked influence upon their manner of conducting that paper. This was their intense love of country. Both Edward Baines and his brother Frederick, though they never called themselves patriots, were among the most patriotic men I have ever known. They were Nonconformists and Liberals, and consequently, in the belief of their ignorant political opponents, they ought also to be Little Englanders of the huckster class. Instead of being Little Englanders, they were all through their lives the advocates of a sane but ardent Imperialism. They loved their country, and they believed in it—believed in it not only as the foremost nation of the earth, but as a great instrument for good among the peoples of the world. It followed that, whilst the *Mercury* advocated advanced Liberal opinions on most domestic questions, it was always in foreign affairs the supporter of an enlightened and reasonable Imperialism, and on any question affecting international policy it resolutely refused to take the mere partisan point of view. I have dwelt at this length upon some of the characteristics of the *Leeds Mercury* and its proprietors when I first became acquainted with them because

they had a great and abiding influence upon my own character and opinions. At Preston I had learned to sympathise with the democracy, and to believe ardently in the cause of political reform. At Leeds I came in contact with a wider and loftier standard of Liberalism, and, whilst retaining my faith in the principles of my party on domestic questions, I added to it a conviction, not less profound, of the duty of advancing the interests of the British Empire throughout the world by every means in my power. In later years, when I was myself the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, some of my excellent friends in London —and notably Mr. Stead—were wont to deplore my tendency in favour of Imperialism in foreign affairs, and to attribute it to the influence upon me of the Pall Mall clubs. As a matter of fact, I was led in this direction by the influence of these two estimable Yorkshire Nonconformists.

My first stay in Leeds in the somewhat anomalous position I have described lasted for little more than eighteen months. During that period I found plenty of work to do as a descriptive writer and reporter, and was brought into contact with some notable and interesting persons. Some months after I had become connected with the *Mercury*, I renewed my acquaintance with the tragical vicissitudes of colliery life. An explosion occurred at the Oaks Pit, near Barnsley, which led to the sacrifice of three hundred lives. Such a loss of life, exceeding that on many an historic battlefield, was in itself terrible, but the circumstances attending the accident at the Oaks Pit added to the grimness of the tragedy. When I reached the colliery a few hours after the explosion occurred

I found that some two hundred of the men who had been working in it were known to have been killed, but that many more were believed to be still alive in the distant workings, and that a large rescue party had gone below to recover them. Having sent my last despatch to Leeds, I went to an inn at Barnsley to snatch a few hours of sleep before resuming work at daybreak. In the morning, as I was hastening back to the colliery to learn what progress had been made during the night, I suddenly saw a dense volume of black smoke shoot out of the mouth of the pit, and, rising high in the air, spread in a fan-shaped cloud of enormous size. Immediately afterwards the dull reverberation of an underground explosion fell upon my ear. A rough collier was walking beside me, and when he heard that ominous sound he turned white, and staggered against the wall which lined the road. "God have mercy on us!" he cried, "she's fired again." It was an awful moment. Both I and the pitman knew that, in addition to any survivors of the first explosion, there were twenty or thirty brave men risking their lives in a work of mercy when this new catastrophe took place.

We ran to the pit at our utmost speed, and when we reached the bank we found ourselves in the midst of a distressing scene. The engineers and workmen who had been engaged at the mouth of the pit were completely unnerved by this unexpected disaster, and were weeping like children. The second explosion had driven the "cage" completely out of the shaft, and it hung in a wrecked condition in the gallows-like scaffolding which surmounted the pit. There was

thus no means of descending the shaft, even if anyone had been courageous enough to do so. This renewed explosion was, I ought to say, almost unprecedented in the long story of colliery accidents. In a few minutes the wives and friends of the search party below came thronging around us with agonised inquiries as to the safety of those whom they loved. For a time all was confusion and despair ; but very quickly the voice of authority was heard, and the pit platform was cleared of all except the small party that remained on duty and myself. It was, as a matter of fact, a place of danger, for, as a second explosion had occurred, it was quite possible that it might be followed by a third. In spite of this risk, it was resolved to communicate, if possible, with the bottom of the shaft.

By order of the engineer in charge, we all lay down at full length on the platform, and one of our number was pushed forward until his head and shoulders protruded over the black chasm of the pit, from which a thin column of smoke was still rising. He was armed with a hammer, and with this he struck one of the metal guiders of the ruined cage, giving the pitman's "jowl" or signal, "three times three, and one over." Lying breathless, we listened, hoping for some response. But there was only the silence of death. Thrice the brave man repeated the signal, but no answering sound came from the depths of the pit, and sadly we came to the conclusion that all had perished. The signal man was dragged back from his post of peril, and we were consulting eagerly as to the next step to be taken, when a third explosion suddenly took

place, shaking the platform on which we stood, and covering us with fragments of burning wood. Several of us were slightly hurt, but no one sustained any serious injury. The painful fact that was forced upon us, however, by this new explosion was that nothing could for the present be done to ascertain the fate of the gallant fellows who had apparently been lost in their attempt to rescue their comrades. It was clear that the pit was making gas, and that a fire was burning somewhere in the workings, which in due time might—and, as a matter of fact, did—cause fresh explosions. In these circumstances nothing could be done except to pour water into the pit in the hope of extinguishing the fire. Sorrowfully the band of workers abandoned the pit-heap, leaving only a couple of young mining engineers to keep watch above the scene of death.

In the middle of the following night—repeated explosions having taken place during the day—a remarkable incident occurred. One of the engineers left in charge—named, if I remember aright, Jeffcock—was suddenly startled by hearing a sound proceeding, apparently, from the depths of the pit. He went to the edge of the shaft, and then heard unmistakably, far below him, the "jowl" for which we had listened in vain on the previous morning. It proved that there was someone living in the pit, and Mr. Jeffcock instantly determined to save him if he could. The shaft was a very deep one. The cage which was the ordinary means of descent had, as I have already explained, been destroyed, whilst the pit-sides had been torn by the successive explosions, so that they were in a highly dangerous state. But undaunted by these difficulties and

dangers, Jeffcock carried out his heroic task. Summoning assistance, he caused himself to be lowered at the end of a rope to the bottom of the shaft. Heaven only knows what were the terrors and dangers of that descent. He faced them all unflinchingly. At the bottom of the pit he discovered not any member of the search party, for they had all succumbed, but one of the men employed in the colliery, who, by some extraordinary chance, had escaped with his life not only from the original explosion, but from all those which followed it. With immense labour and risk he brought this man, the sole survivor of more than three hundred, to the pit's mouth, and the next night the thoughtless fellow for whom a brave man had risked so much, and whose own escape from death had been almost miraculous, was carousing in a public-house in Barnsley, and pocketing the coppers which hundreds of curious persons paid for the privilege of seeing him.

One evening, in the summer of 1866, when I was on duty in the *Mercury* office, I received a telegram which Mr. Baines had despatched from the House of Commons half an hour before. It stated that the Home Secretary had just received information that Chester Castle had been attacked by five hundred Fenians from Manchester, and that troops were being despatched from London to meet them. I saw that a train which left Leeds late in the evening would land me at Chester an hour or so after midnight, and I at once made up my mind to take it. When I reached Chester all was quiet at the station, and there were no signs of a Fenian rising. I asked the chief official on duty if he knew anything about the affair.

All he could tell me was that during the early hours of the evening the waiting rooms, and even the platform itself, had been filled with crowds of "working men in their Sunday clothes," who had seemed to be waiting for somebody or something. There were many hundreds of them, and their unexplained presence had greatly puzzled the railway officials. Some time before I arrived they had disappeared.

I went out into the streets of the old city. The darkness of the summer night still brooded over me, but there was light enough to see that at every street corner and every open space a crowd was gathered. They were curious crowds. In every case the men were clustered in a circle, their faces all turned towards the centre. They seemed to be listening intently to someone who, in the middle of each little group, was speaking in low but earnest tones. I made my way to one of the small crowds, and, joining it, tried to hear what it was that the speaker in the middle was saying; but instantly a strange thing happened. The crowd fell apart, melted away into the gloom, and I suddenly found myself standing alone. Thrice did I thus attempt to learn what was passing in these mysterious groups, and every time the result was the same. I accosted individuals in the streets, and questioned them as to the meaning of the curious scene, so unusual in the dead of night in a quiet cathedral city. No man answered me, except in some unintelligible syllable. I was not molested, nobody was uncivil, but from no one could I get a word of explanation. Gradually, as morning began to break, the throng became thinner. It was dispersed like the mist by the sunshine.

By four o'clock Chester was apparently deserted by its strange visitors. I went to the castle, and found that all was quiet there. I went to the police office, and here I was told that the men were undoubtedly Fenians, but that they had been guilty of no violence, and had given no excuse to the police to interfere with them. They had apparently come to Chester from every quarter, Liverpool, Manchester, and Stafford having each contributed a contingent. But few had come by rail, most having entered the city on foot. What it all signified the police declared they could not understand, though they had no doubt that it had meant mischief. At five o'clock I returned to the station, and saw two special trains arrive within a few minutes of each other. These brought down a full battalion of the Guards from London. It was a fine sight to see the regiment marching with fixed bayonets from the station to the Castle. When the last man had disappeared within the Castle gates, we knew that, whatever plot had been hatched, it had miscarried.

The next day I gave in the *Leeds Mercury* a full account of what I had seen at Chester, and stoutly upheld the theory that a Fenian raid, which had somehow or other miscarried, had been intended. But, on the same morning, almost every other newspaper in the United Kingdom published an account of the affair that had been supplied by a Liverpool news agency. In this account the whole matter was turned into ridicule, and the authorities were said to have been hoaxed, or carried away by their own excited imaginations. But I had seen those strange, mysterious groups, planted so thickly in the streets of Chester under

the silent night, and I could not accept the explanation of the Liverpool reporter. Still, for the moment his story was that which was generally believed, and I had to submit to the suspicion of having allowed myself to be befooled. Not until more than twelve months later was the truth revealed. It came out in the course of the trial of certain Fenian prisoners that there really had been a plot to seize, not Chester Castle, but the arms it contained. The conspirators knew that the guard in the Castle was very weak. They hoped to get into the place by stratagem, and to seize the contents of the armoury. Then they meant to capture a train, and, having destroyed the telegraph wires, to carry their booty to Holyhead, where they expected to find a steamer which would land them in Ireland. It was about as mad a plan as was ever devised—as mad as John Brown's seizure of the arsenal at Springfield. But desperate men attempt daring deeds. Fortunately for the peace of the realm, the plot against Chester was revealed to the Government in time, and when the little army of Fenians knew that they had been betrayed, they silently dispersed without striking a blow. It was, I confess, a satisfaction to me when the informer—Corydon, if I remember the name aright—confirmed the truth of my interpretation of that strange scene at Chester ; and I had the additional satisfaction of feeling that I was one of the few living men who had, with his own eyes, actually seen a hostile army assembled on English soil.

A reporter's life brings him into contact both with tragedy and comedy. I have an amusing recollection of a visit paid by Edward VII.,

when Prince of Wales, to Upper Teesdale during my stay in Leeds, for the purpose of shooting on the Duke of Cleveland's moors. I travelled in the special train which took the Prince and his party to the little station of Lartington, then the terminus of the line which now connects the east and west coasts. No royal personage had visited that beautiful valley before. It was Sunday, and the whole population seemed to have turned out to see the train, in which the heir to the throne travelled, fly past them. Everywhere it was greeted with the waving of hats and handkerchiefs; but I saw one old man, apparently an agricultural labourer, who was not content with uncovering his head when the train went by. Reverently he sank down upon his knees, and remained in that position until long after we had sped past him. From Lartington the Prince and his party were to drive to the inn at High Force, a dozen or fourteen miles away. I, and a companion, representing a Sheffield newspaper, were to take up our quarters for the night at the little village of Middleton-in-Teesdale, halfway to High Force. A country omnibus had been provided for the Prince and his friends, and in this they drove off. We had to walk, as no vehicle was to be got.

When we had tramped a mile or more on our way, we met two men who were walking quickly towards Lartington. One of them, who from his appearance might have been a village schoolmaster, accosted us politely. "Can you tell me if his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has arrived at Lartington station yet?" "Yes," I replied, "he got there more than half an hour

ago." "Then where is he?" said my interlocutor in an injured tone of voice. "He surely cannot be stopping there?" I told him that this was not the case, and that he had already preceded us along that very road. "Impossible!" retorted the schoolmaster. "I've been on this road ever since the morning, and I can assure you that his Royal Highness has not passed this way." "Did you not see a small omnibus pass," I asked, "with some luggage on the roof?" The schoolmaster's companion, who was younger, admitted that he had done so. "Well, then," I continued, "you must have seen a gentleman in a brown felt hat sitting beside the driver, and smoking a cigar. That was the Prince of Wales." "Don't attempt to make a fool of me, you impertinent jackanapes!" roared my schoolmaster friend in a mighty rage, and, setting off again at full speed, he proceeded on his way towards Lartington, in search of the kingly vision he expected to discover.

There was another occasion, during those early Yorkshire days, when I had a little experience connected with the Prince. He and the Princess were about to be received as the guests of a great —a very great—dignitary. It was the first occasion on which this really eminent man had entertained their Royal Highnesses, and he had specially furnished certain rooms in his stately abode for their use. He gave a polite intimation that he would be glad to see one representative of the Press of the United Kingdom, in order that he might show him these apartments, with a view to their being properly described in print. My colleagues of the Yorkshire Press unanimously selected me to represent them on this great occasion, and

were good enough to warn me that they would expect at least a column of descriptive matter detailing the glories of the upholstery provided for the Royal apartments.

To my surprise, when I got to the house I was at once brought face to face with the Great Man himself. He was mighty affable, and most desperately anxious that I should do justice to his newly bought furniture. I shall never forget my tour of the bedrooms and boudoirs to which I was expected to do justice. The Great Man pounded the beds to prove their elasticity. He turned down the bedclothes to convince me of the fineness of the linen. He lifted up chairs in order that I might satisfy myself of the solidity of their construction, and he expatiated upon the beauties of curtains, window-hangings, and carpets in periods as sonorous as any with which he had thrilled the House of Lords. I frankly confess that I was astounded, and not a little shocked. I could see that the Great Man was disappointed at my somewhat stolid reception of a florid eloquence of which George Robins, the auctioneer, might have been proud. I do not think, however, he was half so much disappointed as my colleagues were when I returned to them and dictated a dozen lines of severe catalogue as the only "description" I was capable of giving of the furniture of two commonplace bedrooms. I never met the Great Man in after life without seeing him, in my mind's eye, flourishing a chair upside down, or lovingly patting with his mighty hand an embroidered coverlet.

Upon the whole, the most important of the events in which I took part as reporter and

descriptive writer during this period at Leeds was the series of Reform demonstrations in which Mr. Bright played the leading part in the autumn of 1866. I remember no public meetings in the course of my life that equalled them in enthusiasm. The Russell administration had been defeated in the previous session on the question of Parliamentary Reform, the defeat having been brought about by the action of the Adullamites, so-called, under the leadership of Lord Grosvenor and Mr. Lowe. John Bright, to use a phrase that has since become historic, "took off his coat" at the end of that session, and went to the country with the avowed determination of raising such a movement in favour of Parliamentary Reform that even the Tory Government, which was now in office under the Premiership of Lord Derby, would be compelled to yield to it. His plan of campaign was as simple as are most great plans. He arranged to address meetings in the chief cities of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Each meeting was to be preceded by a Reform demonstration held on some open piece of ground in or near the city where the meeting was to be held. These demonstrations took place at Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, Dublin, and London. I was present at all of them.

Never were such open-air gatherings held in England before. On more than one occasion the attendance exceeded a hundred thousand. The gatherings were without exception orderly and enthusiastic. All the smaller towns and villages near the scene of meeting sent deputations. There were great processions through the streets, headed by bands and political banners. At the place of meeting many different platforms were

erected, and resolutions calling upon the Government to introduce a measure of Parliamentary Reform were put simultaneously from all the platforms. Nothing could have been more impressive as a demonstration of national feeling than these wonderful gatherings, so vast, so resolute in their bearing, and yet so orderly. They made even Ministers feel that the time had passed for trifling with the question of Reform. The Government were compelled to yield, and, as everybody knows, the session of 1867 witnessed the passing of the Household Suffrage Act. But by far the most important factor in each of these successive gatherings was the evening meeting that followed the open-air demonstration. At this Mr. Bright was always the chief speaker. I do not think he ever made better speeches than those which he delivered during this autumn of 1866. I have recorded the first occasion on which I heard Bright speak, and have said that his oratory was not so impressive on a first hearing as people might suppose. For my own part, I found that the spell of his magic grew stronger every time that it was renewed, and before I had listened to the last of this wonderful series of orations I had become what I remained to the end—the most enthusiastic of his admirers.

The opening speech of the series was delivered at Birmingham, and it contained one passage that, after all these years, is still stamped upon my memory. It was a brilliant vindication of Mr. Gladstone, as the apostle of Parliamentary Reform, from the sharp attacks made upon him by the Adullamites. Even then the intrigues against Mr. Gladstone's leadership of the Liberal party—intrigues

which did not cease until the day of his final retirement nearly thirty years later—had begun. Bright treated them with characteristic contempt. He inveighed with all his force against the men who were going about declaring that Mr. Gladstone was unfit to be the leader of the party, and, with that accent of withering scorn which was one of his most formidable weapons as an orator, he cried, "If they have another leader who can take Mr. Gladstone's place, why do they not let us see him? *Where have they been hiding him until now?*" That single sentence fell like a hammer upon the heads of the intriguers of the Cave. In face of it they could not continue their absurd attempt to rob Mr. Gladstone of his appointed place.

The most florid and poetical of Bright's Reform speeches was that which he delivered at Glasgow. It consisted, for the most part, of a noble appeal to ministers of religion, and to all interested in the social welfare of the people, to try what a Reformed Parliament could do to remove the burdens laid upon the shoulders of common humanity. "The classes have failed, let us try the nation." The speech closed with a fine peroration in which the speaker, after referring to the effect already produced by the public movement in favour of Reform, declared that he could see "as it were upon the hill-tops of Time, the glimmerings of the dawn of a new and a better day for the country and the people that he loved so well." It was with this peroration still ringing in my ears that I hurried from the meeting to the telegraph office. I was palpitating with excitement under the influence of Bright's magic eloquence. Judge of my

astonishment when I heard two worthy citizens of Glasgow who had just left the hall comment upon the speech in these words. First Citizen: "A varra disappointing speech!" Second Citizen: "Ou aye! He just canna speak at all." This extraordinary incident at least bears out what I said as to the disappointing character of Bright's eloquence upon people who listened to it for the first time. A man needed to grow into an appreciation of it. There was, by the way, an amusing incident in connection with the reporting of this Glasgow speech. Bright, as I have said, had referred to the influence of the great popular demonstrations in favour of Reform, and had spoken of them as "those vast gatherings, sublime in their numbers and in their resolution." Some unhappy reporter, by a very slight slip, made him speak of the meetings as sublime in their numbers and their resolutions—a very different matter.

His last Reform speech in 1866 was delivered in London, in St. James's Hall. It was preceded on the previous day by the usual procession through the streets and an open-air demonstration at Lillie Bridge. The poor Londoners were very much alarmed at the prospect of the gathering. The editors of the morning papers opened their respective Balaam boxes and gave the asses a holiday, to borrow a phrase of Christopher North. Innumerable letters were published, declaring that the mob of reformers, led by the wild man from Birmingham, would probably sack the town; and fervent entreaties were addressed to the Government to line the streets with troops for the protection of peaceful and law-abiding householders. The

Government, which had received its lesson in Hyde Park in the preceding summer, did nothing of the sort; but I believe that a good many houses and even shops in the West End were actually closed and barricaded by their perturbed and nervous proprietors. There was one notable and significant exception to this rule. Miss—now the Baroness—Burdett-Coutts not only did not close her house in Piccadilly, but assembled a party of friends at it, and, seated in the midst of them in the great bay-window overlooking Piccadilly, saluted in friendly fashion the great army of the unenfranchised as they passed along the road. She was cheered vociferously, and must have felt a thrill of satisfaction at the thought that she was recognised as the worthy representative of that stout old Radical reformer, Sir Francis Burdett. I took up my position to see the procession pass in Pall Mall, opposite the Reform Club. I had never before seen that famous building. It struck me at the time as having a cold and gloomy exterior, yet I gazed upon it with reverence as the home of the most distinguished of the men who espoused the cause of liberty. I little thought, on that dull winter day, how many years I was destined to spend within its walls, or how large a part I was to take in its affairs.

Of course, all the fears of the alarmists were falsified. The only untoward incidents were the raids of the pickpockets upon the crowds. I myself was one of their victims, in a somewhat curious fashion. I was riding with another reporter in a cab at the tail of the procession. The crowd, as we approached Lillie Bridge, was very dense, pressing upon us on all sides. Suddenly a hand

was put in at the open window of the cab, and, before I had the presence of mind to grasp the situation, the pin I wore had been removed from my scarf, literally under my very eyes. It was one of the neatest and most impudent robberies I ever saw.

Bright's speech at St. James's Hall was a very fine one. It contained a memorable passage in which he described men dwelling in fancied security on the slopes of a slumbering volcano. He demanded if those who warned them of the peril to which they were exposed were to be accused of being the cause of that peril. It was a brilliant and telling retort upon those who charged him with having stirred up a seditious movement for his own personal ends. But his best speech at St. James's Hall was a brief and unpremeditated utterance at the close of the meeting. Mr. Ayrton, the well-known member for the Tower Hamlets, an advanced Radical, and a man who subsequently made himself notorious as a Minister of the Crown by his aggressive and unconciliatory utterances, was one of the speakers who followed Bright. He referred to the demonstration in front of Miss Burdett-Coutts's house on the previous day, and made some remarks comparing her with the Queen, who was just then in Scotland, by no means to the advantage of the latter. Bright's loyalty, which was strong and real, was outraged by Ayrton's language. In burning words, evidently born of genuine emotion, he repudiated and rebuked the want of respect shown to her Majesty, and declared that any woman, be she the wife of a working man or the queen of a mighty realm, who was capable of showing an intense devotion to the memory of her lost

husband was worthy of the respect and reverence of every honest heart. Years afterwards, I have reason to know, that utterance was borne in mind in high quarters. It laid the foundation of the high personal regard and friendship which her Majesty extended to the old tribune of the people when he became a Minister of the Crown.

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE IN LONDON.

Appointed London Correspondent of the *Leeds Mercury*—My Marriage —Securing Admission to the Reporters' Gallery—Relations between Reporters and Members—Inadequate Accommodation for the Press —Reminiscences of the Clerkenwell Explosion—The Last Public Execution—The Arundel Club—James Macdonell—Robert Donald —James Payn—Mrs. Riddell and the *St. James's Magazine*—My First Novel—How Sala Cut Short an Anecdote—Disraeli as Leader of the House in 1868—A Personal Encounter with him at Aylesbury —Mr. Gladstone's First Ministry—Bright and Forster—W. E. Baxter—Irish Church Disestablishment Debate in the House of Lords—Mr. Mudford—Bereavement.

In 1867 a change unexpectedly took place in my position. The London representative of the *Leeds Mercury*, my old friend Mr. Charles Russell, now editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, retired from his post, and I was appointed to succeed him. In addition to the duties which had been discharged by Mr. Russell, it was arranged that I was to act as London correspondent of the *Mercury* and to continue to be an occasional contributor of leaders. On September 5th in this year I was married at Cheadle Congregational Church, Cheshire, to my cousin, to whom I had long been engaged, and I at once went to London to spend my honeymoon in the delightful occupation of house-hunting. The London suburbs wore a different aspect in 1867 from that which they now present. In the far west of London, at all events, the reign of the semi-detached villa, with its private garden, was

still maintained. There were no lofty "mansions" comprising endless suites for the accommodation of persons of limited means, and the system of a common garden for the residents in a particular street or square was practically unknown outside the central district of the metropolis. Notting Hill, Kensington, Shepherd's Bush, and Hammersmith offered to the man of moderate means the choice among an infinite number of pleasant little villas, each boasting its own garden and lawn secluded from the public eye. My choice fell upon a house of this description in Addison Road North, and there I spent two happy years, the garden, with its fine old tree casting a welcome shade over the lawn, making me forget the fact that I was, at last, an actual dweller in the world's greatest city.

Almost my first business in London was to secure admission to the Reporters' Gallery in the House of Commons. There was an autumn session in that year, 1867, and I was anxious to get access to the Gallery when it began. In order to obtain the coveted Gallery ticket I proffered my gratuitous services as an occasional reporter to the *Morning Star*. My offer was accepted, and after an interview with Mr. Justin McCarthy, who was then editor of the *Star*, I was introduced to Mr. Edwards, the chief of the reporting staff, as a new member of that body. Edwards, who was one of the veterans of the Gallery, was a character in his way. He was an Irishman possessed of a delicious brogue, a devout Roman Catholic, intensely proud of the fact that he had a son in the priesthood. His mind was stored with reminiscences of the Gallery in the days when the status of a Parliamentary

reporter was hardly recognised even in the House of Commons itself. Like so many of the Gallery men of his time, his world seemed to be limited to the little society of which he was a conspicuous member. Nothing appeared to interest him that lay outside the immediate duties of a Parliamentary reporter. His sole reading seemed to be the reports of debates, his sole pleasure listening to Parliamentary speeches. Many amusing stories were told of him by his colleagues. Not long before I made his acquaintance, Mr. Bright, in one of the debates on the Liberal Reform Bill, had made his famous reference to the Cave of Adullam which caused the anti-reformers in the Liberal party to be nicknamed "Adullamites." Mr. Bright was interested in the *Morning Star*, and that newspaper's report of this passage in his speech was obviously confused and defective. The day after it was printed the manager of the *Star* summoned Edwards to his presence in order to complain of this fact. "Do you think our fellows understood the allusion to the Cave of Adullam?" he inquired of Edwards. "Of course they did," replied the latter, hotly. "They're an ignorant lot, I know, but there isn't one of them so ignorant as not to have read the Arabian Nights!"

Edwards was very kind to me. He seemed to feel a profound respect for a man who undertook to do any work for nothing, and he did his utmost to make my somewhat anomalous position personally agreeable. One bit of good advice he gave me. That was that I should not let anyone know that I received no salary. The truth is that in those days the Parliamentary reporters were a very clannish set—almost, indeed,

a close corporation. To my youthful eyes, most of them appeared to be men who had attained an almost incredible age. They could talk of the days in the old House of Commons when no Reporters' Gallery existed, and the unfortunate short-hand writers had to take their notes on their knees, at the back of the Strangers' Gallery. In the House of Lords they had to stand in a kind of gangway, and I have heard a venerable man tell how a certain distinguished peeress, who had to pass along this gangway when she went to hear the debates, used deliberately to brush against the reporters as she did so, and knock the note-books out of their hands. It was, I suppose, her Grace's manner of displaying her peculiar affection for the Press. The reporters looked with suspicion upon any newcomer, and for a time after I entered the Gallery I was viewed with unconcealed dislike by most of my new colleagues.

A somewhat untoward incident that happened on the first night on which I took my seat as one of the *Star* staff added to this feeling. Worthy Edward Baines, sitting on the Opposition benches below me, no sooner recognised me in the Gallery than he felt it to be his duty to come up and have a chat with me. Accordingly he made his way to one of the side galleries adjoining the reporters' seats, and conversed with me for several minutes, pointing out the leading members and officials of the House and making himself generally agreeable, as was his wont. I little knew what offence I was unconsciously giving to my colleagues. In those days a gulf that was regarded as impassable divided the members of the Press from the members of the House. Occasionally the white-haired,

or rather white-wigged, Mr. Ross, the head of the *Times* Parliamentary corps, might be seen holding a mysterious colloquy in some gloomy corner behind the Gallery with some politician; but the overwhelming majority of the reporters had never exchanged a word with a Member of Parliament in their lives, and, to do them justice, they evidently had no desire to do so. The caste of reporters neither had, nor wished to have, any relations with the Brahmins of the green benches below them, and I found subsequently that if by any chance a reporter were detected in conversation with even the most obscure Member of Parliament he thought it necessary to give some explanation of his conduct to his Gallery friends afterwards. It may be imagined, then, with what feelings the veterans of the Gallery saw a newcomer, on his very first appearance in the Gallery, talking on friendly and confidential terms with a well-known Member of the House. Some of the old hands positively snorted at me in their indignation, and one of the few friends I had in the Gallery earnestly warned me that the recurrence of such an incident would prove fatal to my career as a Parliamentary reporter. Who would have imagined then that the relations of journalists and Members would ever assume their present intimate character?

The accommodation for reporters outside the Gallery was very different then from what it is now. There were two wretched little cabins, ill-lit and ill-ventilated, immediately behind the Gallery, which were used for "writing out." But one of these was occupied exclusively by the *Times* staff, and the other was so small that it could not accommodate a quarter of the number of reporters.

One of the committee rooms on the upper corridor —No. 18, if I remember aright—was given up after a certain hour in the afternoon to the reporters, and here most of the work of "writing out" was done. As for other accommodation for the Press, it consisted only of a cellar-like apartment in the yard below, where men used to resort to smoke, and of the ante-room to the Gallery, where the majestic Mr. Wright presided.

Mr. Wright was one of the characters of the Gallery. Like most of the officials of the House in those days, he was a *protégé* of the Sergeant-at-Arms, Lord Charles Russell. Rumour declared that he had originally been a boat-builder on the Thames, and had secured the favour of Lord Charles by his services in teaching his sons to row. He certainly looked more like a boat-builder, or the captain of a barge, than the keeper of the vestibule to the Reporters' Gallery. He was permitted to purvey refreshments of a modest kind to the reporters. He always had a bottle of whisky on tap, a loaf or two of stale bread, and a most nauseous-looking ham. I never, during my career in the Gallery, tasted that ham. The tradition was that every night, when Mr. Wright, at the close of his duties, retired to his modest abode in Lambeth, he took with him the ham, wrapped in a large red bandana which he had been flourishing, and using, during the evening, and for greater security placed it under his bed during the night. I do not vouch for the truth of this story, universally believed by the Gallery men of my day.

I simply repeat that I never in the course of my life tasted one of Mr. Wright's hams. The sole refreshment I ever consumed in his filthy

den consisted of eggs and tea. The tea I drank with unfeigned reluctance, but the eggs, however stale, inspired me with a confidence I felt in none of the other viands provided by the ex-boat-builder. The reporters nowadays have a dining-room of their own, as well as reading-room, smoking-room, and tea-room. The status of the Press is changed indeed.

One of Mr. Wright's characteristics was his love of talking Johnsonese. I can see him in my mind's eye now, as I emerged from the Gallery after a heavy "turn," reclining on the wooden bench which was his favourite place of rest. His head half covered with the famous red bandana; his boots off, and a pair of dirty worsted stockings exposed to view, he twiddled his thumbs, and through half-closed eyes cast a disparaging glance at the young member of the Gallery who had not yet patronised either his whisky or his ham; then, with a grunt, he would wake up and begin to speak. "I hope, sir, that you are intellectual enough to appreciate the grandeur of the debate to which you have just been privileged to listen. Sir, it fills me with an amazement that is simply inexpressible to listen to those two men, Gladstone and Disraeli, when they are a-conducting themselves as they 'ave been this evening. What I want to know, sir, is, where do they get it from? You and me could never do such a thing—no, not a moment. In my opinion they are more than mortal." But enough of Mr. Wright, who is dead now, though he lived to see the twentieth century born, and to mourn over the changed times which no longer made the hungry reporter dependent upon his famous ham.

The first night of that autumn session of 1867 was a memorable one. Mr. Disraeli sat on the Treasury Bench as leader of the House. Opposite to him sat Mr. Gladstone, now the recognised leader of the Liberal party. Mrs. Disraeli had been seriously ill; was, in fact, still ill when Parliament met. Mr. Gladstone, who never overlooked the courtesies of debate, in opening his attack upon the Government after the speech had been duly moved and seconded, made touching reference to the personal anxieties of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Disraeli was visibly moved. He suddenly covered his face with his hands, and one could see that his eyes were filled with tears. Nearly thirty years later there was a similar scene in the House, in which Mr. Gladstone was again the moving cause. This was when, referring to a speech by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, he spoke of it in terms that made Mr. Chamberlain himself flush with emotion, and caused the tears to gather in the eyes of that hardened political fighter. Strange are the links which bind the generations together!

It was in the late autumn of 1867 that one of the most remarkable of the outrages committed by the Fenians in London took place. This was the explosion at the Clerkenwell House of Detention. The object of the crime was the rescue of two Fenians who were confined in the prison. The authorities at Scotland Yard had got wind of the plot, and sought to put the governor of the prison, and the magistrates who controlled it, on their guard. The latter declared themselves quite able to look after their prisoners, and declined the proffered assistance of the police. Instead of keeping guard, as they should have done, round

the walls of the House of Detention, they contented themselves with keeping the prisoners—whose names, if my memory does not fail, were Burke and Casey—in their cells at the hour when they usually took their daily exercise in the yard. A wheelbarrow, laden with powerful explosives, was deliberately wheeled up to the prison wall, outside the exercise ground, at the time when Burke and Casey were supposed to be walking there. An orange was thrown over into the yard, this being the signal that had been agreed upon with the captives, and the fuse attached to the barrel of explosives was lighted. Then the conspirators quietly retired, nobody molesting them. A terrific explosion followed.

I had just left the reading-room of the British Museum that afternoon, and was crossing the quadrangle, when I heard a sound which my experience of the Oaks Pit enabled me at once to recognise as that of an explosion. I thought that some kitchen boiler in an adjoining house must have burst; but nothing was to be seen, and I went my way, merely making a note, with the reporter's instinct, of the exact moment at which the explosion took place. The next morning the London papers were full of the details of the great crime. Several persons, including some children, had been killed outright, and many more had been injured. A breach had been made in the prison wall, but the Fenian prisoners, of course, had not escaped, owing to the precautions taken by the authorities. The whole country was roused to a violent state of indignation by this crime, which followed close upon a similar attempt to rescue other Fenian prisoners who were being carried

in a prison van through the streets of Manchester. The Manchester crime resulted in the death of a police sergeant named Brett, and for that murder three men—Allen, Larkin, and Gould, who are still famous in Irish history as "the Manchester martyrs"—were hanged.

On the day following the Clerkenwell explosion I attended the inquest upon some of the victims, and, curiously enough, I was the only person who could inform the coroner of the exact hour at which the outrage was committed. The police were soon in hot pursuit of the culprits. Five men were arrested, and after a tedious investigation at Bow Street were committed for trial at the Old Bailey. If I remember aright, they were Irishmen hailing from Glasgow. I made my first acquaintance with Bow Street Police Court at the examination of these men. It was the old police court—a dismal, stuffy, ill-ventilated room—where justice had been administered for several generations. I have a lively recollection of the fact that whilst I was reporting the proceedings I suddenly fainted, for the first time in my life; and I still remember gratefully the kindness of the police, who removed me from the court room into the fresh air, and tended me with the utmost care until I had recovered. This sympathy with illness is one of the best characteristics of our London police.

The trial at the Old Bailey resulted in the acquittal of all the prisoners except one, a man named Barrett. He was convicted, and sentenced to death. Great interest in his case was felt in Glasgow, and I was asked by one of the Glasgow newspapers to telegraph to it a full account of the execution. It was in one respect to be

a remarkable occasion, for an Act had just received the assent of Parliament putting an end to public executions, and Barrett's was to be the last event of the kind. I and an old newspaper friend named Donald, who was also commissioned to describe the scene, agreed to stay up all night in order that we might witness the gruesome preliminaries of a hanging at the Old Bailey. We were on duty in the Reporters' Gallery up to a late hour of the night, and I remember that Mr. Bright, rising from his seat below the gangway, made an appeal to the Home Secretary to spare the condemned man's life. It was very unusual for such an appeal to be made in that fashion, and it was still more unusual to make it within a few hours of the time fixed for the execution. The Home Secretary was, of course, unable to comply with Mr. Bright's prayer, but this scene in the House of Commons was undoubtedly a solemn one, more solemn and impressive than the tragedy to which it was the prelude. Donald and I, when the House at last rose, sauntered slowly through the streets, taking note of that night side of London, which was novel to both of us. In the early hours of the morning we found ourselves at Covent Garden, where we watched the unloading of the vegetable carts and the unpacking of the great hampers filled with sweet spring flowers. Before six o'clock we had reached the Old Bailey, where already a large crowd was gathering.

Rumours of an attempted rescue, even on the scaffold, had been freely circulated. Calcraft, the executioner, had received a number of threatening letters, which had frightened him greatly. The police, knowing what the Fenians had already

attempted in the way of rescuing their friends, were very much on the alert, and more than a hundred officers, in private clothes and armed with revolvers, had been placed outside the barriers amongst the crowd. At six o'clock the great gates leading to the yard of the Old Bailey court-house were thrown open, and with a heavy, rumbling sound the grim old scaffold which had figured in so many scenes of horror was for the last time drawn forth from its resting-place and wheeled to its position in front of the small, iron-barred door, which, as late as 1900, was still seen in the middle of the blank wall of Newgate Prison. The noise of the workmen's hammers as they made the scaffold fast was almost drowned by the roar of the quickly gathering crowd. All the scoundreldom of London seemed to have assembled for the occasion. It was the last Old Bailey execution crowd. The windows of the public-house opposite the scaffold had been thrown open, and at every window men and women were crowded together, eagerly waiting for the grim approaching spectacle. It was not an edifying sight, this execution crowd.

There was one strange incident connected with it that has never been put on record. Shortly after the scaffold had been placed in position I saw four men, whose faces were familiar to me, trying to force their way through the crowd, and I was greatly startled when I recognised them as the four men who had been tried at the same time as Barrett, but who had been acquitted by the jury. Not knowing what sinister purpose they might have in view, I felt it my duty at once to warn the chief inspector of police of their presence.

He was greatly disturbed, and quickly pushed his way through the crowd towards the place I had indicated to him. I followed close at his heels until we reached the front of the scaffold. As we did so he quickly put his hand upon my shoulder to stop me, and at the same time uncovered his head. It was a strange sight that we saw in the middle of that obscene and blasphemous mob. The four men, who had so narrowly escaped the fate of Barrett, were kneeling, bare-headed, on the stones of the Old Bailey in front of the scaffold on which their friend was about to die, praying silently but earnestly. For several minutes they continued to kneel and pray, and then, suddenly rising, they hurriedly left the crowd and disappeared. "Did you ever see anything like that?" said the inspector to me; and I do not know which of us was the more moved by this strange incident.

Of the execution itself I have only one thing to say: that is, that Barrett died in a very different fashion from any other murderer whom I had seen hanged. He faced death, in fact, like a hero, with undaunted mien, and a smile upon his pallid lips. I observed that his trousers were all frayed and worn at the knees, and remarked upon the fact to one of the warders who was standing beside me. "Yes," he replied, "he has been on his knees, praying, ever since he was sentenced." I came away from the spot rejoicing in the thought that I should never again be called upon to witness that abominable thing a public execution.

It was in 1868 that I gained my first experience of London club-life. This was when I became a

member of the Arundel Club. The club is still, I believe, in existence, and has a home somewhere in the Adelphi. In 1868 it occupied a house at the bottom of a street, running from the Strand to the river, which was swept away when the Hotel Cecil was built. This house had once been the residence of John Black, the well-known editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, a journalist who used to boast that his readers would follow him wherever he liked to lead them. The members of the club were, for the most part, journalists, actors, and artists. It was a delight to me to find admittance to the society I had hitherto regarded with wistful eyes from afar. I could feel at last that I had got a foothold, however humble, in the literary life of London. The man who introduced me to the club was my old friend James Macdonell. We had become intimate at Newcastle, in the days when he was editing the *Northern Daily Express*. His brilliant writing had attracted the attention of the proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph*, and they had brought him to London to act as assistant editor of that paper.

Macdonell was a typical journalist, of very fine character. He was an enthusiast, more than commonly perfervid, even for a Scot. Whatever he believed, he believed with all his heart and soul. He was always in earnest, and always striving to give effect to his opinions. His leaders were really polished essays, of remarkable point and brilliancy. His conversation was as striking and epigrammatic as his writing. He was inspired by generous impulses, and his soul was clean. One of his colleagues on the *Telegraph* declared that Macdonell evidently believed that his chief business in life was to frame

syllogisms and apply them. He had a good deal of the temperament of the French man of letters, and to the enthusiasm of the Gaul he added a fine taste for style. In those early days in London he was full of the possibilities that lay before the penny Press, and predicted that the day was not far distant when the *Daily Telegraph* would supersede the *Times* as the chief organ of English opinion. He greatly admired the shrewdness of the proprietors of the paper, who, having no knowledge of literary quality themselves, had yet an unerring instinct for what was good in journalism. He delighted in one story which I have heard him relate more than once. He had been telling Alexander Russel, of the *Scotsman*, of the shrewd manner in which Mr. Levy, the principal owner of the *Telegraph*, had been criticising an article of which he did not quite approve. The writer had pleaded that the reasoning of the article was perfectly sound. "We don't want sound reason ; we want sound writing," was Mr. Levy's response. When Macdonell repeated this to Russel, the great Edinburgh editor slapped his thigh, and cried, with an oath, "The Lord knew what He was about when He chose that people for His own !"

It was not to be Macdonell's fate to convert the *Telegraph* into a second *Times*. On the contrary, after a few years in Fleet Street, he himself went to Printing House Square, where he became, in the closing days of Delane's editorship of the *Times*, the principal political leader writer. He made a great mark in that capacity, and drew the *Times* a good deal further in the direction of advanced Liberalism than it has ever been drawn before or since. He

was a strong hater of Mr. Disraeli's Imperial policy, and for a time the leading journal lent no countenance to that line of action. But the curb was put upon the enthusiastic leader writer, with his strong humanitarian views, and he had to see the paper with which he was identified taking a course of which he could not approve. To a man who threw his whole heart into his work, nothing could be more galling than this. Poor Macdonell fairly wore himself out with his ceaseless expenditure of nervous and intellectual force, and he died suddenly and prematurely in 1878. His death was, I think, the greatest blow to English journalism that it has received in my time. In 1868, however, Macdonell was still in the heyday of his physical and mental powers. We used to meet at the Arundel Club in the society that I have described. Sala, Tom Robertson, Swinburne, and others hardly less eminent, formed the company ; and to these Macdonell, when he was moved to talk—as he frequently was—would pour out the epigrams in which he delighted. I can recall some of them that were very brilliant, but they are too personal to be repeated here.

Another friend of those days never attained to anything like fame. He died, as he had lived, a simple working journalist, and he is now remembered only by a handful of personal friends. Yet even now, more than twenty years after his death, I feel that Robert Donald was in many ways one of the most gifted men I have ever known. He had come from Edinburgh to fill a place in the Reporters' Gallery, and he added to his work as reporter that of London correspondent of the *Glasgow Herald*. With the rest of his intimate

friends, I had an almost unbounded admiration for his gifts, and an unqualified belief in his future. We knew from constant and intimate intercourse the wealth of intellect and of feeling that he possessed, and we were convinced that when he revealed these riches to the world he would impress others as much as he had impressed us.

He had been engaged for years in writing a novel—a novel that, we were convinced, would be a notable addition to the great treasury of English literature. He was very reticent on the subject of this *magnum opus*, but at last he consented to submit the manuscript to me and to another friend with whom he was equally intimate, Mr. Charles Russell. I can recall the thrill of expectancy and delight with which I first turned to the voluminous pages of Donald's book. I can remember how I read on far into the night, revelling in the freshness and vigour of the style, in the brilliancy of the dialogue which abounded throughout the story, and in the insight into character and the grasp of human motives that were everywhere revealed. After I had read a hundred pages I was convinced that all our anticipations as to Donald's future fell short of the mark. But I read on and on, and slowly, yet certainly, a deadly sense of disappointment crept into my heart. It was not that there was any falling-off in the quality of the work. Every page was as fresh and as strong as those which preceded it. But when I had read a thousand pages—large pages, closely written—and had come to the end of that part of the work that he had finished, I made the appalling discovery that the story he had to tell had not advanced

a single step beyond the point he had reached in the first chapter. Apparently it would require thousands of pages more to complete the tale, and the work was already as long as "Middlemarch" itself.

Donald had the faculty of writing admirably—far better, I still think, than any but the greatest of his contemporaries; but he lacked the chief essential of a novelist, the power of making his story march. Russell, when he read the manuscript, compared it to an immense torso, heroic in its proportions, splendid in its workmanship, but nothing more than a fragment after all. "And yet what a quarry it is!" he said to me when we were discussing it. "If only some inferior writer were allowed to dig into it, and transfer its gold and marble to his own pages!" My poor friend's personal story was a real tragedy. He accepted the advice we gave him, and, laying aside the huge unfinished manuscript, began to write what he meant to be a short and simple story. He submitted the opening chapters to the editor of the *Glasgow Weekly Herald*. That gentleman was delighted with it, and at once accepted the novel for publication in his journal. The first few weekly instalments were read with the keenest pleasure by everybody, and the hope ran high that we had found a new writer who was destined to take his place in the first rank of English authorship. But by-and-by the readers of the *Herald* made the discovery that had been made by myself when I read Donald's unfinished manuscript. Each chapter of the tale was brilliant in itself, but no single chapter advanced the movement of the story by a hair's breadth.

For weeks and months the novel ran its course, until the murmurs of discontent on the part of the readers swelled into a positive roar. Mr. Stoddart, the editor, who was a warm friend of Donald's, again and again implored him to expedite the development of the plot, and again and again he undertook to do so. But it was beyond his power to fulfil his promise. Then, one day, a terrible thing happened. I was lunching with Donald in a club in St. James's Street, one of the proprietors of the *Herald* (now dead) being also his guest. This gentleman suddenly turned to Donald, and speaking not with intentional brutality, but simply in the frankness of unrestrained good-fellowship, asked him "when that d——d long-winded story of his was going to stop?" adding that it must be got out of the way in a week or two, as they wanted to begin the publication of another. I saw how my poor friend turned pale at the cruel thrust. He faltered out a promise that he would finish the tale at once, but I felt that his heart was broken. He went home and bravely did his best to keep his promise, but he only found once more that the task was beyond his strength; and the unfortunate editor was reluctantly compelled to call in an outsider to put an end in a summary fashion to a story which had escaped completely from the grasp of its author. Donald never recovered from the blow. His own ambition was crushed and mortified, and the ardent hopes of his friends were all destroyed. He did not long survive this tragical experience. And yet what a man he was! And what capacities he possessed, capacities which would have enabled him to delight the world, if only

he had not lacked the poor faculty of the story-teller!

These were two of my great friends during my first residence in London, and they were friends of whom any man might have been proud. Others I held scarcely less dear, but they are still, happily, living, and I must refrain from dwelling upon them. I had not been long settled in London before I found work of different kinds accumulating on my hands. I wrote London letters every week for the *Madras Times*, under the editorship of an old friend, James Sutherland, and I contributed to various provincial papers. But that which chiefly attracted me was literary work for the magazines, and it was in connection with this work that I first became acquainted with one of the dearest and most honoured of the friends of my life, James Payn. I had been for some years an occasional contributor to *Chambers's Journal*, and had received more than one encouraging note written in a hand that it was difficult to decipher, and simply signed, "Editor, *C.J.*" At last it occurred to me that a series of descriptive articles relating to the places and scenes with which I had become familiar as a Parliamentary reporter might be accepted by the editor. With much trepidation—for I was still a neophyte in London literary life—I addressed a personal note to Mr. Payn, asking for an interview. I got a cordial reply, inviting me to call upon him at the office of Messrs. Chambers in Paternoster Row. Though I entered his presence with fear and trembling, in two minutes I was at my ease, and talking freely to the kindest and most generous man that ever wielded the editorial pen. Neither of us then

knew how dear we were to become to each other, and how close and affectionate was to be our intercourse during more than twenty years.

To Payn I was, of course, merely a very humble contributor to the journal he edited; but I was received in a most friendly and cordial fashion, and found, much to my delight and not a little to my astonishment, that the brilliant man of letters before me was eager to recognise the bond which a common calling created between us. There was no air of patronage in his treatment of my modest proposals. He did what he could to make me feel that we stood on an equality. This was Payn all over. Throughout his life he was one of those men of letters who, whilst never sinking into the boon companionship of Bohemia, show their respect for the calling they have adopted by treating all the other members of that calling with an unaffected respect and cordiality. Such men are the salt of our order. Payn's generosity to young and unknown writers has been attested by many men who in later life attained eminence, to whom he gave the first helping hand in their long struggle against fate. When, in later days, I read these tributes to the splendid and unselfish service which Payn had rendered to English literature, I always recalled him as I saw him in the dingy office in Paternoster Row on that day in 1868, when he first gave me the right hand of fellowship. I shall have much to say of him hereafter. At this point I need only record the fact that I became a frequent contributor to *Chambers's Journal*, writing for it a series of articles, descriptive of the work of the journalist, that were afterwards republished in

a volume called "Briefs and Papers." In this little book I collaborated with my old friend and schoolfellow, Mr. W. H. Cooke, who was the author of the chapters describing the experiences of a young barrister.

By-and-by, as I extended my connection with magazine work, I was brought into contact with Mrs. Riddell, the gifted writer of that admirable novel "George Geith," and of other stories of equal merit. Mrs. Riddell was the editor and proprietor of the *St. James's Magazine*, and I became a regular contributor to its pages. Here I was brought into intimate association with a phase of literary life which belongs rather to the past than to the present. Mrs. Riddell had achieved sudden fame by her brilliant stories. In these days such fame would have meant for her a handsome income and a recognised position in society. But forty years ago fame as a writer was not necessarily rewarded in this way. My first interview with Mrs. Riddell, who was a lady of delightful manners and charming appearance, took place literally in a cellar beneath a shop in Cheapside. The shop was her husband's, and here certain patent stoves, of which he was the inventor and manufacturer, were exposed for sale. I had been greatly surprised when Mrs. Riddell, wishing to speak to me about certain contributions to the *St. James's Magazine*, had asked me to call, not at the office in Essex Street, but at this shop in Cheapside. I was still more surprised on finding this gifted woman, in whose brilliant pages I had found so much to delight me, acting as her husband's clerk, and engaged in making out invoices in the cellar beneath the shop.

I am afraid that, in spite of her husband's occupation, I cannot give Mrs. Riddell a testimonial as a business woman. She was, as I have said, delightful as a writer, and charming as a woman, but her editorship of the *St. James's Magazine* did not suggest that she had the aptitude necessary to success in business. She was very kind to me, and gave me the opportunity of writing on any subject, and at almost any length, in the pages she controlled. More than once I have had three long articles in one number of the magazine; but I was always harassed by the fact that the magazine was never "out" on the proper day, and that the editor was always in a hurry for the copy I had to supply. My chief contributions to the *St. James's* were a series of sketches of statesmen, subsequently republished in a volume, entitled "Cabinet Portraits," another series of sketches of London preachers, and a novel called "The Lumley Entail."

This novel was my first venture in fiction, and one curious incident, at least, was connected with it. I had submitted to Mrs. Riddell nothing more than the first two or three chapters, and a synopsis of the plot, when I offered it to her. With a courage that was undoubtedly rash, she accepted the story forthwith, and decided to begin its publication at once. I was very busy with my newspaper work at the time, and in consequence could only write my monthly instalment in bare time for its inclusion in the coming number of the magazine. One awful day, when the *St. James's* for the current month was already overdue, I received a telegram from the publisher bidding me send in my instalment immediately,

as they were waiting for it in order to go to press. I rushed to the office in a state of consternation, and explained to the man that I had duly sent in my manuscript more than a week before. "I know that," he said quite coolly; "I got it myself, and gave it to Mrs. Riddell; but unfortunately she has lost it, so you will have to write it over again." Here was a pretty dilemma for a budding novelist! I did not take "The Lumley Entail" so seriously as I should have done, and I had a very vague recollection of the contents of the lost instalment; but there was no help for it. I had to sit down there and then in the office in Essex Street, and write another instalment of equal length. It was altogether different from that which it was meant to replace, and I have no doubt that it changed materially the fortunes of the more or less human beings who figured in my tale. Such, however, was the fate of a young contributor in the hands of an unbusinesslike editor.

But, as I have said, Mrs. Riddell, apart from her imperfect observance of editorial customs, was a delightful woman. She and her husband lived in a rambling old house in the Green Lanes, Tottenham. Here she entertained many of the notable men of letters of her time, and here I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of not a few of them. The establishment was a somewhat primitive one. The workshop in which Mr. Riddell carried on the manufacture of his patent stoves was at the back of the house, and a rather large central hall, dividing the dining-room and the drawing-room, was used as a kind of show-room in which choice specimens of Mr. Riddell's wares were displayed. The special feature of these patent

stoves was that they were ornamental as well as useful. They were made to look like anything but what they were. One stove appeared in the guise of a table, richly ornamented in cast-iron; another was a vase; a third a structure like an altar, and so forth. But whatever their appearance might be, they all were stoves. One winter's night, when there was an inch of snow on the ground, I went out to the Green Lanes to attend one of Mrs. Riddell's literary parties. It was bitterly cold, and one of the stoves in the hall had been lighted for the comfort of the guests. We were a merry company, including, if I remember aright, George Augustus Sala, and some other well-known journalists. In the course of the evening Mrs. Riddell asked a well-known barrister, who at that time dabbled a little in literature, and who has since risen to fame and to a knighthood, to favour us with a song. He was an innocent young man in those days, and tried to excuse himself. "Now, Mr. C——," said Mrs. Riddell, "I know you have brought some music with you, so you must get it and do as I wish." The young man admitted that he had brought music, and blushingly retired to the hall in quest of it. Suddenly, those of us who were standing near the door heard a groan of anguish, and, looking out, we saw Mr. C—— holding in one hand the charred remains of a roll of music, and in the other the remnants of what had once been an excellent overcoat. He had laid his coat, when he arrived, on what was apparently a hall table. Unluckily for him, it happened to be the patent stove that had been lighted that evening to cheer and warm us when we escaped from the storm

outside. I draw a veil over the subsequent proceedings.

I believe it was on this very evening that I heard Sala utter one of those jocosely brutal sentences for which he was celebrated. The literary men who frequented Mrs. Riddell's house were not, I am sorry to say, so respectful to her husband as they might have been. They made it very clear, in fact, that it was the novelist and not the inventor of stoves whom they came to see, and they were impatient when the latter attempted to intrude his views upon them. A party of us were gathered in the dining-room, smoking and otherwise refreshing ourselves. We had been listening to story after story from some of the best talkers in the Bohemia of those days, and again and again the attempts of Mr. Riddell to contribute to our entertainment by some long-winded narration had been vigorously and successfully repulsed. At last the unhappy host found an opening, and had got so far as "What you were saying reminds me of an interesting anecdote I once heard," when Sala, striking his fist upon the table, thundered a stentorian "Stop, sir!" Mr. Riddell looked at him, half frightened, half indignant. "If the story you propose to tell us," continued Sala, "is an improper one, I wish to tell you that we have heard it already; and if it is not improper, we don't want to hear it at all." Yes, clearly one had wandered into Bohemia in those days.

My work in the Gallery of the House of Commons was of great interest. I watched Disraeli during his first brief premiership in 1868, when he had to hold the reins of authority in a House in which

his party was really in a minority, and when he had nightly to confront the fierce attacks of Mr. Gladstone, who was rallying his own followers, both in the House and in the country, for their successful onslaught upon the Government. It was a unique and most valuable experience to watch these two great men in their gladiatorial combats across the table of the House: Gladstone wielding the mighty broadsword of his powerful eloquence, and seeming as if at every moment he would annihilate his antagonist; Disraeli, with marvellous skill and exquisite adroitness, bringing the rapier of his wit to bear upon his opponent, and again and again pinking him with some stinging epigram or smart retort that set all the Tory benches roaring with delight. It made one's young blood grow warmer to watch the struggle from the impartial height of the Reporters' Gallery.

I was in the House on that memorable occasion when Disraeli made a speech which astounded his followers so much that they were only able to account for it by the hypothesis that he had taken too much to drink. This is a harsh way of stating the case, but there is no doubt a measure of truth in it. Disraeli was not a self-indulgent man, but in those days his devotion to his duties in the House was so great that he would sometimes sit all the evening listening to a debate without taking any food, and in his dinnerless condition the stimulant he took before making his speech in reply occasionally got into his head. Certainly, in the memorable speech on the Irish Church question, to which I allude, he was betrayed into excesses for which some justification was necessary. I remember seeing him, at the close of that speech, draw his

handkerchief from his pocket and wave it round his head, before he sank back exhausted on the Treasury bench; and I can still see the pale and angry face of Mr. Gladstone as he sprang to his feet to reply, and hear the stern tones in which he referred to "the excitement—the too obvious excitement—of the right honourable gentleman."

Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff has recently furnished the world with many volumes of personal reminiscences. He does not include among those reminiscences any reference to a scene which I witnessed in the House of Commons during Disraeli's first brief premiership, although Sir Mountstuart was himself the hero of the occasion. It was one Wednesday afternoon. There was an empty House and a dull debate, but Disraeli was in his place on the Treasury Bench, so that anything might happen. It pleased the Mr. Grant Duff of those days to deliver himself of a philippic, at once voluminous and violent, against the Prime Minister. He quoted the opinions of foreign critics to the disadvantage of Mr. Disraeli; he emphasised them by fine flights of his own imagination; and he illustrated his speech with a wealth of gesticulation and a variety of intonation that convulsed his scanty audience with laughter. People wondered mildly what punishment was in store for the audacious man who was thus breaking one of the unwritten canons of the House, for in those days it was regarded as bad form on the part of a man not himself in the front rank to attack one in the position of Mr. Disraeli. As the speech proceeded, the Prime Minister sat in his favourite attitude, his arms folded, his head slightly bent forward, and his vacant eyes fixed upon the points of his

boots. He might have been carved in stone for any trace of emotion that he displayed. We in the Gallery anticipated that this air of absolute indifference was to be the punishment of his rash assailant. But to our surprise, when Grant Duff sat down, Disraeli instantly sprang to his feet. As he did so, he raised his single glass to his eye, and looked fixedly across the House to the spot where the member for Elgin was slowly composing himself after his mighty effort. For some seconds Disraeli, with an air of cold, cynical aloofness, continued to gaze at the unfortunate man. Then, with a favourite action, he suddenly dropped the glass from his eye, and, waving his hand with an airy gesture of contempt, said, "I shall not detain the House, sir, by referring to the—the *exhibition* we have just witnessed; but I merely wish to say in reply to an honourable member below the gangway," and so on. This was, I think, the most cruel speech I ever heard Disraeli make, and for the moment it seemed to have a crushing effect upon its subject.

In those days Disraeli was not the Tory idol he subsequently became. I well remember, on the historic evening when Mr. Gathorne Hardy moved the adjournment of the House because of the absence of Mr. Disraeli at Windsor, and the news instantly spread that Lord Derby had resigned and Mr. Disraeli had become Prime Minister in his place, that there was a hubbub—not merely of excitement, but of disapproval—in the Lobby. Tory members of the old school were furious at having "that Jew," as they contemptuously styled him, set over them. I walked from the House that evening with Sir Edward Baines

and Mr.—afterwards Sir Charles—Forster. They were both full of the dislike felt on the Tory side for the change in the leadership of their party. It is strange to note how quickly the views of a party change with regard to its leaders. I remember the time when the idea that Mr. Gladstone would ever be Prime Minister was treated with ridicule by not a few of those who sat beside him in Parliament. I have myself heard Mr. Disraeli assailed in scornful and sarcastic terms by Lord Salisbury, and have listened to his sneering retort. Even after Disraeli became Prime Minister in 1868 it is notorious that the Duke of Buccleuch refused to entertain him as his guest when he visited Scotland to rally the party before the General Election of that year. It was on the occasion of this visit that he gave such offence to the graver section of the Tories by the speech in which, explaining the genesis of the Household Suffrage Act, he used the words, "I educated my party." A few years later the whole party was proud of having been educated by him; but when he made this speech his words were regarded as an insolent display of vanity on the part of an upstart who had elbowed his way to the front at the expense of better men.

My only personal encounter with the great Tory leader was connected with this same speech at Edinburgh. I went to Aylesbury, during the course of the 1868 election, in order to report a speech of his. He spoke in the Corn Exchange, which was crowded to excess. The accommodation for the reporters was quite unequal to their demands, and I had to stand among the crowd and take my notes as best I could. A good-natured farmer

in front of me invited me to use his back as a desk, against which I placed my note-book. Disraeli had not proceeded very far with his speech before I found that my friend was not by any means in agreement with the illustrious speaker. Again and again he interrupted him with exclamations and questions. For a long time Disraeli took no notice of these interruptions, but at last one stung him into action. The orator had paused for a moment, and my farmer friend, seizing his chance, bawled out in a stentorian voice, "What about educating your party?" The Prime Minister instantly turned round, raised his glass to his eye, and with an angry and contemptuous glare, transfixed—me! The farmer's courage had given way when he found that his shot had told, and, to my unutterable disgust, he dropped upon his knees, and left me to face the music. Disraeli looked at me for a perceptible space of time, and then, dropping his glass, said, in those chilling tones of which he was a master, "I shall certainly not try to educate *you*, sir." Everybody stared at me; everybody groaned at me; and it was only the consciousness of my own innocence that kept me from dropping on my knees beside the treacherous author of my humiliation.

In that election of 1868 I recorded my first parliamentary vote. Living at 24, Addison Road North, I was an elector of Chelsea, and I duly supported at the polling booth the joint candidature of Sir Charles Dilke and Sir Henry Hoare. This was the last General Election before the passing of the Ballot Bill. Representatives of the different candidates sat on either side of the poll clerk, and duly thanked each elector as

he recorded his vote for the man whom they represented.

I wrote an article in the *St. James's Magazine* describing the opening day of the session of the new Household Suffrage Parliament. It was called "The Birthday of an Era," and, looking back, I think I was fully entitled to make use of that somewhat high-sounding phrase. It was the beginning of the Gladstonian epoch in English history, and, for good or for evil (in my own opinion mainly for good), it was destined to make a deep impression on the institutions and fortunes of the nation. When Mr. Gladstone entered upon his first term of office as Prime Minister, he was certainly surrounded by a wonderful band of colleagues. They included Lord Granville, Lord Hartington, Lord Kimberley, Mr. Lowe, Mr. Bright, Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Childers, Mr. Bruce, and Mr. Forster. In my time no stronger ministry than this has had power in England. The men I admired most after Mr. Gladstone were Mr. Bright and Mr. Forster. I had not yet made the personal acquaintance of Forster, and did not dream of the close ties by which we were eventually to be united; but I was drawn to him from the very first by an instinctive feeling of liking and esteem. His blunt speech, his careless dress, his unpolished but genuine manners, all seemed to me to mark him out as that rare creature a thoroughly honest politician; and whilst I sat in the Reporters' Gallery, there was no one after Mr. Gladstone whose speeches delighted me more than did those of Forster.

Before the Ministry had been long in office I was brought into contact with one of its members,

Mr. W. E. Baxter, the Secretary to the Admiralty. Mr. Baxter was a great reformer and a financial purist. When he went to the Admiralty he found extravagance and confusion, not to speak of corruption, pervading all the departments connected with the provision of *matériel* for the Fleet. He set to work at once, with the vigour of the new broom, to cleanse the Augean stable. Naturally he excited the bitter hostility of those whose personal interests were affected by his action, and these, being in many cases persons of influence, were able to inspire attacks upon his policy in the leading organs of the daily press in London. I, in my small way, as London correspondent of the *Leeds Mercury*, had defended him against some of these attacks. Baxter noticed my defence, and sought me out in order to thank me for it. He did more than this. He proposed that I should hear from him from time to time how he was advancing in his work of reorganisation and reform, and should make the facts known to the public through the columns of the *Mercury*. This was great promotion for me. In those days the provincial press had no direct connection with Ministers or the leaders of parties; and the "London correspondent" was not in a position to supply his readers with news at first hand, or with any news, indeed, that was at once original and authentic. Through Mr. Baxter I suddenly found myself placed in a position that enabled me to provide the *Leeds Mercury* with political and administrative news that was not only of the highest importance, but that had not appeared anywhere else. For Mr. Baxter was better than his word. When I went, as I did several times a week, to see him

at the Admiralty, he not only told me all that was going on in his own department, but all that could be published with regard to the proceedings of the Government as a whole. I think I am correct in saying that I was at that time the only correspondent of a provincial newspaper who was favoured in this way, and my letter to the *Mercury* began to be read and quoted in many different quarters. Certainly my position was made both easier and more important by this friendship with Mr. Baxter.

During the whole of 1869 I attended the debates in Parliament, and watched with eager sympathy the progress of the Government in the heavy task that it had set itself. The passing of the Bill for disestablishing the Irish Church was the chief business of that memorable session. The speaking on both sides was at the highest level. In the House of Commons, Gladstone, Disraeli, Bright, Lowe, and Gathorne Hardy distinguished themselves above all others. But the palm for oratory, as has so often been the case, was borne off by the House of Lords. That House presented a brilliant spectacle during the debates on the second reading of the Bill which the majority of the peers detested so heartily. The speaking against the measure was far more effective than that in its favour. Indeed, at this distance of time I can only recall one speech by a supporter of the Bill which impressed itself so strongly upon me as to remain fresh in my memory after the lapse of more than thirty years. That was the speech of Dr. Connop Thirlwall, Bishop of St. David's, who was courageous enough to stand against his brethren, and to prefer the claims of justice to those of the

Establishment in which he was a leading figure. On the other hand, two at least of the speeches delivered against the Bill are still vividly present to my mind. The first was the speech of Dr. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, an extraordinary display of florid and flowing eloquence. It moved the House so greatly that when he sat down the Tory peers rose, almost in a body, and rushing across the floor, offered him their personal congratulations and handshakes in recognition of his success. Such a scene, common enough in foreign Chambers, was almost without precedent in our cold and stately House of Lords. The other memorable speech was that of Lord Derby, "the Rupert of debate." Though I had no sympathy with his views, I could not but admire the almost passionate fervour with which he pleaded for the Irish Church, and the indignation with which he denounced those who were bent upon despoiling it. I remember his quoting with dramatic effect the curse uttered by Meg Merrilees upon Ellangowan—a curse which he intended, of course, to apply to Mr. Gladstone. It was the last speech that Lord Derby ever made. When the announcement of the final surrender of the Peers, after the Bill had passed through Committee, was made by Lord Cairns, I saw Lord Derby rise from his seat and, with a face inflamed with indignation, hobble swiftly out of the Chamber. He never entered it again.

This incident belongs to the tragedy of politics; but the debates on the Irish Church Bill in the House of Lords were not without their touches of comedy. One of these was supplied by Lord Westbury, the ex-Liberal Lord Chancellor. He

made a very amusing, a very bitter, and an almost wholly inaudible speech against the Bill. The older peers, with their hands behind their ears, clustered round him to catch his witticisms, some even kneeling on the floor in order to be near enough to hear him. They chuckled and laughed consumedly, but we unfortunate reporters in the Gallery had but the faintest idea of what it was they were laughing at. One sentence I did indeed catch, and still remember. It was to the effect that if the Irish Church were disestablished there would be no provision for the celebration of holy matrimony in Ireland in accordance with Protestant rites. "Was it possible," Lord Westbury asked, with simulated indignation, "that the authors of this iniquitous measure really meant to drive all the unmarried Protestants of Ireland into mortal sin?" The old peers around him enjoyed this effort of the imagination mightily.

The other comic incident I remember was of a different kind. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Trench, on behalf of his fellow-prelates, made a long speech against the Bill. Dr. Trench was a man of very high character and fine talent, but he was not at home in the House of Lords, or, indeed, in a political speech. When he advanced to the table of the House, he caused a slight titter by producing an unmistakable black sermon case, and spreading it open before him. By-and-by, as he proceeded with his sonorous but somewhat melancholy discourse, everybody perceived that he was preaching a sermon. The intonation of his voice, the phraseology, the measured sweep of the hands, all smacked of the pulpit. The whole House listened eagerly, and watched intently for

the accident that was certain to happen. At last it came. "I beseech you, my brethren," said the Archbishop, in a moment of apostolic absence of mind, and the whole House exploded in a roar of long-suppressed laughter, which made it impossible to learn the nature of the Primate's appeal.

For any man of intelligence the position of a parliamentary reporter is one of great interest and full of great possibilities. In my days in the Gallery there was, as I have already stated, little communication between the Gallery and the House proper. The art of exploiting the Press had not yet become familiar to the politicians, and a great gulf seemed to be fixed between the reporters and the members. Since then, that gulf has almost disappeared, and not a few men have stepped down from the Reporters' Gallery to the floor of the House. But our very aloofness from the inner side of parliamentary life, with its personal interests and its incessant intrigues, strengthened our position as independent critics and observers. We looked on as at a play in which we ourselves had no part, and those who possessed the instinct for politics which is the gift of the born journalist were able to see more and learn more from our independent standpoint than many of the actual actors saw and learned. Some of the most capable of our political writers and critics were trained in the Gallery. One of my most intimate friends in those days was Mr. Mudford, who subsequently became known to fame as the editor of the *Standard*, and who built up that journal's great reputation. Of Mudford's capacity as an editor it is hardly necessary to speak here, but I may

note in passing that even in his early days in the Gallery he displayed the marked characteristics which distinguished him when he was at once the ablest and the least known of London editors. His independence of character was even then combined with a strong indisposition to make many acquaintances, or to cut any figure in public. It was my privilege to be counted thus early in his career among his friends, and I am glad to say that it is a privilege which I still enjoy.

My stay in London was brought to an end in the early part of 1870, amid circumstances that changed the whole tenor of my life, and for a time left me a crippled and wounded man. I have said nothing in these pages of my private life or my domestic happiness. My marriage had proved to be, in all respects save one, everything that the heart of man could desire. The one drawback was my wife's delicate health ; but she had shown such marvellous recuperative powers at times when the doctors had spoken in the gravest manner of her case, and she possessed so unfailing a flow of natural good spirits, that it was impossible for one who, perhaps, saw only that which he desired to see, to believe that her case was hopeless. Yet hopeless it really was during the whole of the two short years of her married life. Her death—it took place on the 4th of February—was a blow that seemed to shatter my own life to its very foundations. I cannot dwell upon it, unless it be to say that at that time of unspeakable sorrow I first learned the value of human sympathy, and made the discovery that there are, happily, in this world not a few men and women who seem to have the gift of being able, not indeed

to remove, but to share and to lighten the burdens of their fellow-creatures. It is only those who have gone through such an ordeal as this of mine who can fully understand all that human sympathy may be in that hour of darkest woe when a man, still standing on the threshold of life, finds himself alone in a world which to him has suddenly become an empty desert.

One incident, and one only, of those days I will venture to recall. I was walking along the Strand in the blackest hours of my misery, when I saw an old man approaching me whose depth of mourning showed that he had sustained the same bereavement as myself. There was probably a difference of fifty years in our ages, but we were alike in the sacred kinship of sorrow. As he drew near me I saw his eyes fixed upon mine with a long look of tenderness and sympathy that went to my very heart, and comforted me subtly. I envied him his age, which seemed to bring him so much nearer to the end. I do not think he envied me my youth. It was but for a moment that we were thus drawn to each other in the crowded street—"ships that passed in the night," in the darkest night, indeed; but that moment I have never forgotten.

CHAPTER VII.

EDITOR OF THE *LEEDS MERCURY*.

Forming Good Resolutions—Provincial Journalism in the 'Seventies—Recollections of the Franco-German War—The Loss of the *Captain* and its Consequences to me—Settling Down at Leeds—Acquaintance with Monckton Milnes—Visits to Fryston—Lord Houghton's Chivalry—His Talk—His Skill in Judging Men—Stories about George Venables—Lord Houghton's Regard for Religious Observances.

In April, 1870, there came to me most unexpectedly the offer of the editorship of the *Leeds Mercury*. It came, as readers of the preceding pages know, at a time when my whole life was unsettled by the bereavement which had made me a lonely, restless man. It was, I need hardly say, an offer of a very tempting character. After little more than two years of the life of a journalist in London, the prospect was held out to me of a recognised position on the Press as chief of one of the principal provincial dailies. The position meant increased remuneration, freedom from the anxieties of miscellaneous work, and the possession of influence of no ordinary kind. All my friends and relatives urged upon me the madness of refusing such an offer, especially since it had come to me unsought and at an unusually early age. Yet for a time I was more inclined to refuse than to accept the proposal. I loved London, and the freedom of its literary life, and I knew by experience how sharp was the contrast between the social life of the capital and that of a provincial town like Leeds.

Besides, London drew my sympathies more strongly than ever as the scene of those short years of married happiness which had now come to an end. So, for a time, I wavered as to the acceptance of the new position offered to me, and it was only under the sharp pressure of friends and relatives that I at last wrote to my old friend, Mr. Frederick Baines, and accepted the editorship of the *Mercury*.

No one not a member of the Baines family had edited the journal since it became the property of the first Edward Baines, so that it was a new departure in more respects than one that the proprietors were making in placing the editorship in my hands. The cause of the vacancy which I undertook to fill was a rather curious one. Mr. Tom Baines, who had been editor since his father, Edward Baines, entered Parliament, had become an adherent of the religious body known as Plymouth Brethren. A man of culture, of fine ability, and of high character, he had deliberately associated himself with a sect which regarded the affairs of the world as being outside the scope of a Christian's duties. He found it impossible to combine attention to the many questions of politics and public business that must engage the thoughts of a newspaper editor, with the Bible readings and sermons upon spiritual truth to which he specially desired to devote himself. It was a sore trouble to his excellent father when Mr. Tom Baines decided that the life of a journalist and that of a Plymouth Brother were not consistent; but, with that noble respect for all conscientious convictions which distinguished Edward Baines both in public and in private, he bowed to his son's decision,

and regretfully acquiesced in his retirement from a post that he had filled with eminent distinction.

So it came about that on May 15th, 1870, I found myself in the train on my road to Leeds to take charge of the duties of the important post to which I had been called. I do not think that I had any conception at that time of the real importance of that post, or of the heavy responsibilities attaching to it. I was barely eight-and-twenty, and hitherto the bent of my inclination had been towards literature rather than political journalism. The ideal life, I thought, was that of a successful writer of fiction. Though a sincere and convinced Liberal, I had always possessed an unfortunate capacity for seeing the defects and blunders of my own party, and I had a strong distaste for the doctrine which finds expression in the phrase, "My party, right or wrong." Besides, I was then, as I still am, strongly attracted towards different personalities. There were men on the Conservative side of the House of Commons whom I regarded with deep respect and esteem. There were others, sitting on the Liberal benches, whom I held in something like contempt. Upon the whole, therefore, I did not feel so much attracted by the responsible editorship of a great political journal as might have been expected, and it was with considerable trepidation, and many doubts as to my own capacity, that I made that fateful journey to Leeds. I remember distinctly the current of my thoughts as the train flew northwards. The death of my wife had sobered me, and all youthful levity seemed to have been buried in her grave. I spent the four hours of the railway

journey in making good resolutions as to my conduct in my new position.

The resolution which impressed itself most forcibly upon my mind was a determination not to make any enemies. I could honestly say that I had made none so far in the course of my life. If my circle of acquaintances was but a narrow one, it consisted wholly of persons who were truly my friends. In my innocence I believed that in the public position I was about to take this pleasant condition of things might be continued. I would be fair, just, and courteous to everybody, I resolved; and thus I should pass through life as one of those fortunate men who enjoy everyone's goodwill. I can smile now as I recall the speedy shattering of that illusion which awaited me at Leeds; but I well remember the almost tragical sense of surprise and disappointment which I felt when I first found that in honestly doing what I conceived to be my duty, in a public matter with which I had to deal, I had most unexpectedly made a personal enemy. Speaking now with long years of experience behind me, I may be allowed to bear my testimony to the fact that it is impossible for a public man in this country to deal honestly with the many controversial questions that politicians have to handle without finding that, in the course of his life, he must of necessity make some enemies. Human nature being what it is, it seems impossible for a man to take a clear and independent line on great questions without at times giving offence to others, who may be just as honest and conscientious as himself. It would, of course, be ridiculous to say that the test of a man's worth as a politician,

whether in Parliament or the editorial chair, is the number of his enemies; but I am convinced that a public man who has absolutely no enemies must be a person who has deliberately shirked his duties and stifled his conscience.

My first step on entering on my duties as editor of the *Mercury* was to make a complete change in the editor's hours. My predecessor had been in the habit of writing his leader in the middle of the day, and it was very seldom that he was to be seen in the office after four o'clock in the afternoon. In common with all, or nearly all, the editors of the provincial dailies of his time, he never attempted to write upon late news. It was the fashion then for the provincial editor to wait until he had ascertained the opinions of the London daily papers upon current questions before he ventured to express his own. It was a delightful system so far as the ease and comfort of the provincial editor were concerned. To be able to finish the labours of the day in the early hours of the afternoon was an ideal state of things from the personal point of view. Fortunately I did not yield to the temptation to continue the old, easy-going *régime*. My experience in London had made me acquainted with the interiors of the offices of more than one of the daily newspapers, and I was no longer oppressed with a provincial reverence for London editors as beings who dwelt apart. I saw no reason why I should not express my own views upon the questions with which I had to deal, instead of waiting to pen a mere reflection of the views of other persons. So, almost from the first day of my editorship, I went to the office late, and wrote upon some subject that was absolutely

fresh. Barely three weeks had passed before I was able to make a distinct impression upon the readers of the *Mercury* as a result of this changed system.

It was on the night of June 9th, 1870. I had finished my leader for the next morning's paper, and was just preparing to leave the office, when a telegram was brought to me with the sad announcement of the death of Charles Dickens. My old leader was instantly thrown aside, and, sitting down, I wrote out of a full heart of the irreparable loss which English literature and the Englishmen of that generation had suffered. No matter what the faults of the article might be, it made a great impression upon the readers of the *Mercury* next morning, for the death of Dickens was one of those events that touch the heart of the nation, and everybody was anxious to read any comments upon it. The impression made by my article was deepened by the fact that no other provincial paper had commented upon the absorbing topic. From that moment I seemed to have gained the ear of my readers, and Leeds, which, not unnaturally, had taken coldly to me in the first instance, began to open its heart and extend its sympathies to the new and unknown editor. All this sounds like sheer egotism ; but as to the fact that, with my editorship of the *Mercury*, the practice of writing upon the latest topics in the provincial daily press first became general, there can be no dispute, and as it is a fact of interest in the history of the Press, I have dwelt upon it at this length.

Very soon the attention of newspaper readers all over the world was absorbed by one engrossing

topic—the great war between France and Germany. The experiences of an editor during those exciting days were not uninteresting. There have been no such days since in my recollection. In the first instance, when the clouds were gathering with startling suddenness, few persons in this country believed that war was possible. It was incredible, they held, that two civilised nations should fight over such a question as the candidature for the Spanish throne. All the orthodox authorities were furiously angry with those journals that pointed out the real dangers of the situation, and the difficulty of arresting two great nations like France and Prussia when they had once begun to approach each other with the language of menace. One day Mr. Frederick Baines brought into my room one of the most influential citizens of Leeds. His purpose in calling was to protest against the alarmist tone of the articles in the *Mercury*, and nothing could have been better than the imposing air of authority with which he informed me that he knew for a fact that neither the members of the English Government nor any other well-informed persons looked upon a war as being even remotely possible. I felt very uncomfortable, and somewhat overweighted by the air of my visitor. I could see, too, that Mr. Frederick Baines, though thoroughly loyal to me, was also impressed by his friend's statement. But in spite of the high authority on which this gentleman spoke, just three days later war was declared.

Never in my time has the world looked on at a drama at once so stupendous and so enthralling in its excitement as that of the Franco-German War. We have had wars since then which have

affected this country more nearly, and have, of course, stirred deeper emotions in our breasts, than this war between France and Germany; but as a dramatic spectacle on which, thank God, we Englishmen could look as spectators merely, this great struggle was unsurpassed and unapproached. The march of events was so swift, the surprises were so great and numerous, the field of operations was so near and so familiar, and the political upheaval so terrible and so complete, that we onlookers were kept in a state of perpetual, almost breathless, suspense whilst the struggle lasted.

Of course, the newspapers were full of the war from the moment of its breaking out. The arrangements for special correspondents and news from the front were more complete than they had ever been before, and as the astounding drama swiftly advanced from the trivial overture at Saarbruck to the overwhelming catastrophe at Sedan, the civilised world had eyes and ears for nothing else. Barely seven weeks elapsed between the declaration of war and the surrender of the Emperor and the fall of his empire. During those seven weeks, public opinion in this country seemed to be equally divided between the two belligerents; but after the collapse of the Imperial army and the fall of the empire, the balance swung round in favour of France. That wholesome human sentiment which leads most men to take sides with the weak against the strong acted upon us, and drew our sympathies to unhappy France. The French have never given us credit for this fact, but have continually reproached us for not having espoused their side in a quarrel with which we had absolutely no concern. On the other

hand, the Germans have never openly resented our sympathy with France in her day of immeasurable misfortune. I do not think, however, that they have forgotten it.

It was after Sedan, when it became evident that Paris was about to be invested by the victorious troops, that the war entered upon a new phase. At first nobody believed in a possible siege of Paris, any more than people now believe in a possible siege of London. I remember one of the sub-editors of the *Leeds Mercury*, who happened to take the Prussian side in the quarrel, bursting into my room one day in a furious passion to denounce the conduct of those wretched Frenchmen, who were positively cutting down the woods outside the city barriers in order to prevent their affording shelter to the enemy. My friend had once visited Paris, and had been struck by the beauty of these woods. Apparently he thought that, even for their own salvation, the French had no right to disfigure scenes of beauty that had delighted the eyes of sentimental tourists.

The newspapers, when it became evident that the siege of Paris was, after all, destined to take place, had to adopt measures to secure correspondents who were prepared to endure the hardships of that siege in order to furnish information to the British public. The most famous of these correspondents was Mr. Labouchere, who furnished the *Daily News* with the most entertaining journal of a siege ever written by a besieged resident. On behalf of the *Leeds Mercury* I engaged the services of another well-known journalist to act as our representative during the siege. This gentleman very naturally required a considerable sum of

money in advance for his maintenance during the investment. He had written one or two admirable letters in anticipation of the siege, and I cheerfully sent him the amount for which he asked. He received it just before the Prussian lines closed round Paris, and I do not remember that I ever heard from him again. The letters which it is to be presumed he wrote to the *Leeds Mercury* never reached that journal.

When the investment began, and Paris was cut off from the outer world, we onlookers with the strip of sea between had certain visible signs of the reality of the siege offered to us in our very midst. The front page of the *Times* furnished one of these signs. Day after day, for weeks at a stretch, the whole of that page was occupied by messages from the French outside Paris to their friends and relatives within the walls. At first English readers were puzzled by this phenomenon. The investment of the city was very strict, and it was difficult to understand how the newspaper could be smuggled inside the barriers ; but presently the truth was made known. This page of the *Times* was part of the machinery of the famous pigeon post which connected the outside world with Paris during its long beleaguerment. The page was photographed on a microscopic scale. The film on which the photograph was printed was carried into Paris by a pigeon, a magic-lantern was used to enlarge the photograph, and the messages it contained were copied by Post Office officials, and forwarded to their different destinations. Such a postal service was, I imagine, unique. It was certainly most ingenious.

Another sign of the siege of Paris was presented during those bright autumn days by the appearance of Piccadilly, especially on a Sunday afternoon. I generally spent Sunday in London, and during that autumn, when walking on a Sunday in Piccadilly, I noticed more than once that the majority of the well-dressed persons promenading on the northern side of the street were Frenchmen—most of them wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. They were chiefly Imperialists, for whom there was no place in France under the new *régime*, and they had flocked to London literally in thousands, so that the great West End thoroughfare resounded at times with the French tongue.

One feature of that autumn was the unwonted magnificence of the displays of the aurora borealis. I never saw such fine auroras before or since. Night after night the sky was lighted up by the brilliantly coloured shafts of quivering flame. It is hardly surprising that the vulgar should have associated the phenomenon with the wonderful tragedy which was being enacted so near to our shores. The most ignorant, however, did not regard it as an omen. They honestly believed that they saw in the heavens the reflection of the glare from burning Paris.

I did not settle down to my editorial work in Leeds easily. Everything drew me back to London, and I told the proprietors of the *Mercury* that I did not mean to retain my post after the war came to an end. But at this point a fresh piece of good fortune came to me, though it arose out of a deplorable calamity. The *Captain*, the experimental vessel built by Captain Cowper Coles on designs

that many high naval authorities had declared to be dangerously unsound, capsized in the Bay of Biscay, and sank with nearly every soul on board, including her designer, Captain Coles himself. There had been a great newspaper discussion about the *Captain*, and the *Times* had taken a vigorous part in it against the Admiralty authorities and in favour of Captain Coles. On the morning on which the news of the disaster was announced, the *Times* in its leading article maintained that the catastrophe was in no sense due to the instability of the ship, and urged that another *Captain* should be forthwith built. The *Leeds Mercury*, on the other hand, took what I regarded as the commonsense view, and insisted that for the future the opinions of the trained experts of the Admiralty should be preferred to those of irresponsible enthusiasts, even though they happened to be, like Captain Cowper Coles, men of genius.

Mr. Edward Baines, like most old journalists, had a profound respect for the wisdom of the *Times*, and he was very much disturbed when he found that the *Leeds Mercury* took a directly opposite view of the disaster to that of "the leading journal." He expressed to me, in his usual friendly and courteous manner, his regret that I had expressed myself so strongly, and evidently felt that what the *Times* said must be true. But on the following day the *Times*, after an interval for reflection, completely changed its position, admitted that the design of the *Captain* must have been at fault, recalled the fact that the catastrophe had been foreseen by the highest authorities, and protested against the building of any more ships of the same character. There

was nothing surprising in this change of front, for the first views of the paper had been obviously inconsistent with the facts and with commonsense. But Mr. Baines was immensely impressed by the fact that the *Leeds Mercury* had grasped the essential truth before the *Times*. He greatly exaggerated the merit of his editor in the matter, came to the conclusion that I had become indispensable to the paper, and would not rest until I had entered into a new and binding agreement with him to continue my editorship on conditions that were greatly to my own advantage.

Thus this grave disaster to an English ship led to my final relinquishment of the idea of returning to London as a literary free lance, and to my settling in Leeds as permanent editor of the *Mercury*. Gradually my life in the town of my adoption became more agreeable to me. I made friends who were kind to me with the characteristic kindness of Yorkshire. I began to feel the power, as well as the responsibility, of my position; and I learned before long that, even in connection with the local affairs of a great community, a man can render services to his fellow citizens quite as important as any that he can render on the larger platform of public life.

It was at the close of 1870 that I first made the personal acquaintance of a man to whom I was afterwards to be deeply and permanently indebted. This was Monckton Milnes, first Lord Houghton. There was no better known figure in London society in those days than Lord Houghton. But he was much more than a figure in society.

Delightful as host, *raconteur*, poet, and man of letters, he was more admirable still as the generous and willing servant of those who needed help. He had his foibles, his likes and his dislikes; but he was not one of those philanthropists who wait to be asked for their help. Where he was attracted towards anyone he was eager to aid, not only without solicitation, but at times even against the will of the beneficiary himself. I have known many kind men, many true friends, in the course of my life; I have known none whose kindness was more unstinted, more constant, or more generous than that of Lord Houghton. He had come to Leeds in December, 1870, to attend some public meeting, and he was entertained as his guest by Mr. Baines, whose son, as I have already explained, was my predecessor in the editorship of the *Mercury*.

At the dinner-table at Mr. Baines's house, Lord Houghton was as vivacious and as full of good talk as usual. The conversation happened to turn upon slips of the tongue. Houghton said that the most amusing he remembered was that of the lady who, meeting a friend in the street, exclaimed, "Have you heard of the dreadful thing that has happened to my poor brother John? He has become a Yarmouth Bloater." The good lady meant, of course, to say "Plymouth Brother." To Houghton's surprise, his story was received in embarrassed silence, and someone, as he told me afterwards, trod heavily upon his foot. Monckton Milnes was not a man to be easily disconcerted, and he speedily restored the party to a proper mood of geniality; but after dinner he took someone aside, and asked the meaning of the cold reception of his joke. He received the explanation

which the reader will anticipate. It was because Mr. Tom Baines had become a Plymouth Brother that he had been compelled to retire from the editorship of the *Mercury*, to the great distress of his father. My name as his successor in that position was unknown until then to Lord Houghton, but he had no sooner heard it than he invited me to visit him at Fryston.

When I first entered the hospitable door of Fryston, I suffered from a distinct feeling of trepidation. It was new to me to meet men of Lord Houghton's social rank and fame on terms of friendly intimacy, and I confess that I was miserably shy when I made my first appearance among the company assembled in that pleasant morning room, where, long years before, Thomas Carlyle had been first introduced to the amenities of English country-house life. Carlyle has told the world, in a letter written to his wife, how much he was confounded by what seemed to him to be the splendours of a society that he had hitherto viewed only from the outside. His description of his bedroom—it was much larger and grander in the letter than any bedroom that really existed at Fryston—of the servants in livery, the menu of the dinner-table, and of the valet who made unlawful and undesired investigation of the contents of his pockets when he intruded himself upon him in the morning, all bespoke the absolute novice. I do not think, however, that he was a greater novice in 1842 than I was in 1870. A very brief experience enables any person of ordinary intelligence to grasp the essential details of country-house life; but many persons—including Carlyle and myself—would have been spared a certain spell of

nervous discomfort if there had existed some simple written code explaining those usages and customs in which country-house life differs from the ordinary life of the English middle-classes. But kindness puts an end to all difficulties of the shy guest, and certainly there never was a kinder hostess than Lady Houghton.

From 1870 down to 1885 I had the good fortune to be a frequent visitor at Fryston. Lord Houghton's kindness to me at our first meeting only increased as time passed; and writing of him now, long after he has passed away, I must relieve my heart by saying that I owe more to him and to his unceasing efforts, not merely to draw me out, but to push me forward, than to any other friend I have ever made. There was a whimsical side to his character which, naturally enough, attracted more attention than was given to his more sober qualities. The eccentricities of his youth, embalmed by Sydney Smith and the other humorists of the 'thirties and 'forties, had disappeared when I made his acquaintance; but to the last he was absolutely careless as to public opinion, except on such points as those on which he himself shared that opinion. The truest thing that was ever said of him was said by William Edward Forster at the Cosmopolitan Club one night, when Houghton was leaving it. Someone said, referring to Houghton, "He's a good man to trust when you're in trouble, for he'll stand by you." "He'll do more than that," responded Forster; "he'll stand by a man not only in trouble but in disgrace, and I know nobody else who will." This was where the finer trait in Houghton's independence of character came in. He was always ready to espouse the

cause of a man upon whom the world was frowning, but happily this quality is not uncommon among our nobler natures. That which was most uncommon in Houghton's character was his willingness to befriend a man even when he knew that the disgrace into which he had fallen was not undeserved. He could be severe—as severe as anybody I have ever known—upon vice and meanness; but if the sinner needed help he pitied him at once, and was ready to aid him to the best of his power.

His talk in his own house was delightful. It was altogether different from the talk that men heard when they met him at London dinner-tables. Strangely enough, it was at the breakfast-table that he talked best. Most Englishmen are not roused to conversational brilliancy until the day is far spent; but Houghton was at his best at breakfast and immediately afterwards. And how good that best was! He was a walking encyclopædia, although no man was ever less of "a book in breeches." Whenever I wished to clear up some obscure point in history or politics, in literature or in the personal life of our times, I went to him, and seldom was it that I failed to get the light I wanted. As a judge of character he had no equal among the men I have known, and in the years that have flown since his death I have had the happiness of seeing his forecast of the future of not a few men strikingly realised. The first time I ever heard the name of Lord Rosebery was from his lips, in 1874 or 1875. I had seen the name in print, of course, but to me it was a name, and nothing more. "You don't know Lord Rosebery?" said he one day. "Then mark

him well. He is the ablest young man in England, and, I believe, will be Prime Minister before he dies."

On another occasion he shocked me for the moment by a deliverance about Mr. Gladstone. It was in 1880, when the great statesman, having won the most brilliant triumph of his life, and finally defeated his great rival, Lord Beaconsfield, was struck down by serious illness a few weeks after he had regained power. "I am so sorry to see that Gladstone is getting better," Houghton said to me as we sat in the library at Fryston. I could hardly believe my own ears, and expressed my surprise at hearing such a sentiment from the lips of one of Mr. Gladstone's greatest admirers. "Don't you see," responded Houghton, "that if he dies now he will be one of the greatest figures in English history? He has just won the greatest triumph a statesman ever enjoyed. It is impossible that he can remain at this dazzling height. *Now* is the time for him to die." Those who only knew Lord Houghton as a genial cynic would have been surprised if they had known that in his opinion the greatest Englishman of his own time was Lord Shaftesbury, and the greatest Englishwoman Florence Nightingale. Those who were acquainted with his poetry would not have felt this surprise. There is much in his verse, neglected though it now be, which deserves a high place in our national literature. But in his later days—or, rather, throughout his life—the world refused to see his more serious side, and treated him as the humorist and the wit, the cynic, and the kind-hearted but eccentric peer who made it his mission in life to try to fuse the two worlds of society and intellect.

He certainly had wonderful success in bringing together men who stood at opposite poles both of position and opinion. In the days when Mr. John Morley was only known as a promising writer of the most terrible heterodoxy, he dined with Houghton, and was placed next the Archbishop of Canterbury. "Who is that clever-looking young man sitting next the Archbishop?" asked Lord Selborne, who was also at the table. When he was told that it was Mr. Morley, the editor of the *Fortnightly Review* and the author of the famous "little g," he threw up his hands in absolute consternation. But Houghton had a rare discrimination in bringing men together. He never brought people who disliked each other into juxtaposition, as some notorious hostesses of our own time are fond of doing. What he did was to gather round his table men of talent and worth who would have had little chance of meeting but for his kindly and hospitable intervention, and many a lifelong friendship has thus been begun beneath his roof.

One of the earliest lessons a man learnt on being admitted to Houghton's cosmopolitan society was the great need of care in the selection of topics in addressing a stranger. Most persons one met at Fryston had either done something or were somebodies, and occasionally their fame was not of the kind that commends itself to everybody. It was necessary, therefore, to walk delicately, like Agag, in opening a conversation with a stranger. A terrible experience of my own will illustrate this fact. As boy and man I had adored Thackeray, and made him the hero of my literary dreams. There was one incident in his early life about which I was quite unreasonably curious. I wanted

to know which of his schoolfellows it was who broke his nose and disfigured him for life, and I had made up my mind that if ever I met a man who had been at school with him I would question him on this point. During one of my earlier visits to Fryston I found that George Venables, the well-known Parliamentary counsel and Saturday Reviewer, was staying there. Venables was one of the most distinguished men of his day. His ripe judgment commanded universal confidence, whilst the somewhat austere manner which veiled a warm heart inspired chance acquaintances with a certain feeling of awe. During dinner I heard Venables talking about his early days at the Charterhouse, and felt at once that my long-sought chance had come. Accordingly, when I was walking with him in the Fryston woods on the following morning, I plucked up my courage, and asked him if he had been at the Charterhouse with Thackeray. "Certainly I was," replied the eminent publicist; "we entered on the same day, and were great friends all the time we were at school." "Then," said I, rushing blindly upon my fate, "you can tell me what I have long wanted to know. Who was it that broke Thackeray's nose?"

It was winter, and we were walking in Indian file through the woods. As I put this question to Venables, he suddenly stopped, and, turning round, glared at me in a manner that instantly revealed the terrible truth to my alarmed intelligence. He continued to glare for several seconds, and then, apparently perceiving nothing but innocent confusion, not unmixed with alarm, on my face, his own features became relaxed into

a more amiable expression. "Did anybody tell you," he said slowly, and with solemn emphasis, "to ask me that question?" I could truthfully say that nobody had done so. My answer seemed to mollify Venables at once. "Then, if nobody put you up to asking me that question, I don't mind answering it. It was *I* who broke Thackeray's nose. We were only little boys at the time, and quarrelled over something, and had the usual fight. It wasn't my fault that he was disfigured for life; it was all the fault of some wretched doctor. Nowadays a boy's nose can be mended so that nobody can see that it has ever been broken. Let me tell you," he continued, "that Thackeray never showed me any ill-will for the harm I had done him, and I do not believe he felt any." Nor, I must add, did Venables show any ill-will to me for the *gaucherie* which had caused me to rake up this painful episode in his career.

Venables himself had been the victim of another mistake, which he resented more strongly than he did my indiscretion. He told the story to me and to Mrs. Procter one day in the drawing-room at Fryston, with keen indignation. A certain noble lord had approached him at an evening party with an air of extraordinary deference. Venables knew the peer very slightly, and was surprised by the salaams with which he was greeted. His surprise changed to fury when he discovered that his lordship had mistaken him for a notorious millionaire of somewhat dubious reputation who had just blossomed into a baronetcy. "Think of it!" he said with lofty scorn. "The fellow came cringing to me as if I were a prince of the blood, merely because he thought I was that

odious adventurer, and had money in my pocket." Mrs. Procter sprang from her seat, and, hobbling across the room with extended forefinger, cried to Venables, in tones of dramatic intensity, "Does that noble lord still live?"

It was from Venables that I heard a delightful story about our host which, years afterwards, I repeated in writing Lord Houghton's life. It was the story of Carlyle's remark when Tennyson's friends were trying to procure a pension for him from Sir Robert Peel. "Richard Milnes," said Carlyle, taking his pipe out of his mouth, "when are ye gaun to get that pension for Alfred Tennyson?" Milnes tried to explain to Carlyle that there were difficulties in the way, and that possibly his constituents, who knew nothing about Tennyson, might accuse him of being concerned in a job if he were to succeed in getting the desired pension for the poet. "Richard Milnes," replied the sage, "on the Day of Judgment, when the Lord asks ye why ye didna get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it'll no do to lay the blame on your constituents. It's *you* that'll be damned." I always had a half impression that, for some reason or other, Lord Houghton did not like to hear that story told in his presence. All the world knows, of course, that he did get the pension for the poet, and thus escaped the penalty anticipated by the philosopher.

But if Lord Houghton was sensitive on some points, he was frank and courageous in acknowledging his own youthful follies and the punishment which they brought upon him. I shall never forget his taking me to a particular corner in that vast library at Fryston — which, like

some vegetable parasite, seemed to have spread itself over every inch of available wall-space in the house—and taking down from the shelves a volume of the "Life of Sydney Smith." His object in doing so was to show me the original manuscript of the pungent and witty letter in which Sydney Smith rebuked him sharply for having written a somewhat peppery note to ask the Canon if it was true that he had dubbed him "the cool of the evening." "What a young fool I was!" said Lord Houghton, when he had read the letter to me. "And how good it was of Sydney Smith to set me down in that fashion!"

Everybody knows that Lord Houghton was the most tolerant of men in all matters of faith and opinion; but he did not allow mere carelessness or idleness to serve as an excuse for the disregard of religious observances. My usual time for visiting Fryston was on Saturday, when I was free from the charge of my paper for four-and-twenty hours. My kind friend always insisted on Sunday morning that instead of going to church I should spend the morning in strolling in the park, either alone or in his delightful company. This, he would say, was necessary in the interests of my health. I spent more Sundays at Fryston than I can count, but I never entered the little church hard by the park gates until the sad day when I went there to attend his funeral. One Sunday evening, when there was a rather large party at the Hall—including John Morley—we were summoned by the old butler—himself a character not unworthy of commemoration—to prayers in the morning room. Lord Houghton was good enough to intimate to Morley and myself that we should not be expected

to attend, and we accordingly remained in the drawing-room in conversation. A certain young Yorkshire baronet, who was also of the party, influenced by our bad example, stayed behind with us. In a couple of minutes, however, the butler reappeared, and going up to the baronet, said, "Sir Henry, his lordship is waiting for you before he begins prayers." The liberty accorded to the philosophic writer and the editor was not permitted to the country gentleman. I think I ought to add, in justice to Mr. Morley at least, that he and I accompanied the unwilling young man to the scene of the family devotions.

I must stay my hand, however, in these rambling recollections of my kind and brilliant friend and benefactor. No doubt I shall have more to say about him before my task is finished; but for the present I must take up again the thread of my narrative.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY FIRST CONTINENTAL TOUR.

A Generous Scot—Paris after the Commune—An Uncomfortable Journey Home—Illness of the Prince of Wales—Revived Popularity of the Throne—Death and Funeral of Napoleon III.—Burial of the Prince Imperial—Forster's Educational Policy—Bruce's Licensing Bill—My Second Marriage.

WITH the opening of 1871 came the armistice before Paris, quickly followed by the conclusion of peace. Then took place the ghastly upheaval of the Commune, and the eyes of the world were once more riveted upon the great city which has been the theatre of so many tragedies. It shocked everybody to think that the heavy sufferings through which unhappy France had passed, instead of uniting all classes of the people together in the bonds of a common sorrow, had only intensified the conflicts of parties and social grades. But in due time the Communist rising itself was suppressed, and peace at last fell to the lot of distracted France.

In September of this year, 1871, I went abroad for the first time in my life. Passing through Belgium and by the Rhine to Switzerland, I visited the Italian lakes before returning to England by way of Paris. There is no need to dwell upon the incidents of a commonplace tour like this, though one can never forget the delightful sense of exhilaration produced by a first experience of

the living grandeur of the Alps. Switzerland was not so completely hackneyed in those days as it is now, and to me, of course, as a newcomer, it did not seem to be hackneyed at all. I was too young, I think, fully to realise the indescribable charm of Italy, a charm which is felt more strongly by most of us with each successive visit to that land of dreams and beauty. At Milan I was the victim of a not unusual incident in travel. I found myself stranded at the old Hôtel de la Ville for want of money. I had arranged for a remittance to reach me there; but in those days there were no tunnels through the Alps, and Italy was, in consequence, still a long way from England. My remittance, therefore, took longer to reach me than I had anticipated. The result was that I spent certain miserable days in a state of almost complete impecuniosity. I shall never forget the weary hours during which I tramped the streets, and the endless visits to the post office in search of the letter which I awaited so anxiously.

But whilst in this unpleasant position, I was fortunate enough to meet with an instance of genuine kindliness that really raised my opinion of my fellow-creatures. An old Scotsman used to sit beside me at the *table d'hôte* at the Hôtel de la Ville. He was a man of intelligence, and I found his conversation very pleasant. With the pride and sensitiveness of youth, I was, of course, resolute in my determination to conceal from him my unpleasant fix; but one night at dinner he startled me by asking when I was going to leave Milan. I feebly evaded the question by saying that I must first of all see all the sights of the place. "Hoots, man!" he retorted, "ye've seen all the

sights, and ye're jist wasting your time and losing your holiday stopping here. I ken weel what it is ye're waiting for. Ye're short of money—that's it, isn't it ?" I murmured something to the effect that I was expecting remittances which would, no doubt, reach me almost immediately. "Weel, I'm not going to let a young fellow like you lose your holiday," said my friend, in a very positive manner, "and ye'll just have to make me your banker for what ye want, and get away out of this hole as soon as ye can, for there are better sights to be seen than Milan." I could only prevent his forcing money upon me on the spot by promising that if my remittance did not come next day I would avail myself of his generous offer. Happily, the next day relief came, and I was no longer in pawn at Milan. But blessings on the head of that worthy old Scot, who must long ago have gone over to the majority ! At least he nobly redeemed the character of his countrymen from the libel which makes the name of a Scotsman synonymous with meanness.

Paris in September, 1871, presented a strange sight to the eyes of a visitor. The shadow of the double ordeal of the siege and the Communist rising still lay heavily upon it. In the streets traces of the conflict between the Versaillists and the Communards were everywhere visible. Lamp-posts twisted by the shell fire, plate-glass windows perforated by bullets, columns chipped and shattered, and the pavement ripped up for the erection of barricades, were the common sights of the streets ; whilst the blackened ruins of the Tuileries, and the other public buildings destroyed by the rebels, remained to attest the desperate

character of the civil war that had been waged in the capital. The inhabitants had not yet recovered from the privations of the siege and the horrors of the Commune. There were few who smiled, and there were many who could not speak of the past without tears. That which was specially noticeable was the fact that all the fury of the Parisians seemed to be turned against the Communards. Many of them, speaking of the Prussians, referred warmly to the contrast between their conduct and that of their own lawless fellow-citizens.

Outside Paris the traces of the siege were everywhere visible, and driving along the country roads near St. Cloud—where the people were still living in tents and wooden sheds, almost every house having been destroyed — one came constantly upon little groups of graves of German soldiers who had been buried where they fell, each grave marked by its wooden cross with its simple inscription. These monuments spoke eloquently of the tragic character of the struggle. At Versailles, where the National Assembly was sitting, the great bulk of the Communist prisoners were confined in the orangery in front of the palace. Loaded cannon commanded this improvised prison, where many hundreds of men and women were herded promiscuously. Standing on the terrace above the orangery, I leant over the balustrade in order to look on the prisoners beneath. I had to withdraw hastily, for from the miserable crowd there came up an unbearable stench, such as might emanate from a cage of wild animals. Now and then one saw Communists being escorted by soldiers to meet the swift vengeance of the

court-martial which was sitting to try them. These unhappy prisoners, who had little chance of escaping the penalty of death, bore themselves with firmness, and manifestly believed that they were sufferers in a holy cause. Not even the sight of the destruction they had wrought in Paris could wholly stifle one's feelings of sympathy with them in their wretched plight.

I had a second experience of the disadvantages of impecuniosity before I reached London. During the latter part of my trip I had found a pleasant travelling companion in the person of Mr. Charles Townsend, of Bristol, a gentleman who subsequently represented that city in Parliament. As we were travelling straight through from Paris to London, and had, as we believed, ample funds for the journey, we signalised the close of our trip on the Continent by a specially good dinner on the evening of our departure, for which we had to pay a price in accordance with its merits. We were returning by the Dieppe route. The journey by rail was delayed because all the bridges near Paris were broken, and we had to creep across temporary wooden structures. Before we were allowed to board the steamer at Dieppe, all passports were carefully examined. The police were on the search for escaped Communists, and whilst it was easy enough to get into France, it was much more difficult to get out of the country. Our passports, however, were in order, and we were soon lying down to sleep in the cabin of the steamer in the full belief that we should find ourselves in England in a few hours. I slept soundly, and only awoke when the sun was well up in the heavens. The steamer was at rest, and I thought we were

in the harbour of Newhaven ; but, to my dismay, when I went on deck I found that we were still moored to the quay at Dieppe. A terrific north-westerly gale was blowing, and the captain had not ventured to put out. All that day we lay at Dieppe, the result being that the money which would have taken us, under ordinary circumstances, in comfort to London, was expended before we quitted France. When we reached Victoria Station our united capital consisted of a halfpenny. We could not even tip the porter who attended to us. I felt it was the meanest moment of my life. We drove straight to a bank, however, and in a few minutes had each a pocketful of gold. The double lesson I received during this first Continental trip has made me careful ever since to take sufficient funds on every journey to carry me safely through to the end.

The great public event of the autumn of 1871 was the illness of the Prince of Wales. He had been staying in November with Lord Londesborough at Scarborough, and on his return to Sandringham he was attacked by typhoid fever. For a time no anxiety was felt, because it was believed that the illness was a slight one. But suddenly the news was flashed through the country that his Royal Highness had taken a turn for the worse. This was followed a few hours later by the announcement that the Queen and the other members of his family had been suddenly summoned to his bedside ; and yet a little later came the tidings that his case was hopeless, and that he was rapidly sinking. December 14th, the day which had proved fatal to his father exactly ten years before, was at hand, and everybody believed that it would

see another heavy blow dealt at the Royal Family. It is impossible to describe the emotion produced by the most unexpected news of the Prince's condition. The telegrams from Sandringham were of so positive a nature that they forbade hope. On Friday, December 13th, the gloom deepened hourly. At midnight a telegram reached the office of the *Leeds Mercury* saying that the family were gathered round the Prince's bed awaiting his dissolution. That telegram was received in every other newspaper office in the kingdom. Everywhere Lives of the Prince were hurriedly prepared, and articles written announcing the event which appeared to be imminent.

When the time approached for the *Mercury* to be sent to press, though we had made every preparation in case of the Prince's death, the fatal news had not yet arrived. I consequently wrote an article upon his illness and the emotion it had caused, to be inserted if his death had not taken place when we went to press. Needless to say, it was this article, and not that in which the national calamity was bewailed, that appeared in the *Leeds Mercury* next morning. The only other daily newspaper that had a leading article on the Prince's illness was the *Times*. In every other newspaper office the conviction that he was at the very point of death was so strong that no preparation had been made for his possible survival. When the morning of the fateful 14th came it was announced that the Prince, though still in grave danger, had rallied. For several days he hung between life and death, and then began rapidly to mend, thanks to his own good constitution and to the extraordinary care and skill

with which he was nursed by Sir William—then Dr.—Gull.

The revived popularity of the Throne in England may be dated, I believe, from that period. The Queen's long withdrawal from the public eye, consequent upon her widowhood, had led the multitude, ignorant of the manner in which she devoted herself to the heavy duties of her position, to regard her as being little more than a figure-head. Certain politicians, in the autumn of 1871, had taken advantage of this state of feeling to begin a crusade against the monarchy, and a section of the extreme Radicals really seemed to believe that the glorious Throne of England was about to be overthrown. But the sharp touch of personal sorrow changed all this, and revealed to the English people their true sentiments towards the Queen and her family. The grief, universally felt when it was believed that we were about to lose the heir to the Crown, and the affectionate sympathy with which his slow recovery was followed, convinced us all, as they convinced the outside world, that the bonds between the English Throne and the English people were far closer and stronger than most persons had imagined. The trumpery campaign against the monarchy died in a single night, and from that day to this the mutual love and trust of monarch and people have gone on steadily increasing.

The announcement that the Queen proposed to attend St. Paul's Cathedral in state to return thanks for the recovery of her eldest son touched the heart of the nation afresh, and evoked the first great popular demonstration of loyalty that had been witnessed since the early days of the

reign. I was present in the Cathedral at that solemn and stately service on the 27th February, 1872, the precursor of the still more stately service held at Westminster on the 21st June, 1887. Except on the occasion of the Jubilee of the last-mentioned year, and of that of 1897, London has never witnessed a more remarkable outburst of loyal enthusiasm. At night the whole town was illuminated, St. Paul's Cathedral being lighted up after the fashion of St. Peter's at Rome on Easter Day. The crowds which filled the streets were enormous, and as the London police had not then acquired the art of marshalling vast multitudes, there was terrible crushing, and several lives were lost. Three persons were suffocated at Temple Bar, which was already marked for removal. I myself had the narrowest escape from death on Ludgate Hill, where the multitude was packed in one dense, immovable mass for hours. The people in the houses on the hill passed down water in buckets to the fainting crowd, and now and then some woman or child was positively hauled out of it by ropes, and thus placed in safety. It was not a sight that could ever be forgotten, and it impressed forcibly upon one's mind the strength of the hold which the monarch has upon the hearts of the people of this country.

Among those who watched the passage of the Queen and the Prince of Wales from Buckingham Palace to St. Paul's there was one notable and historic personage. This was Napoleon the Third, at that time living in exile at Chislehurst. Within twelve months the ex-Emperor was dead. His death was the cause of a singularly picturesque demonstration on the part of the

ruined Imperialist party. I went to Chislehurst to see the lying-in-state which preceded the funeral. The train which took me down from Charing Cross was crowded with Frenchmen wearing the rosette of the Legion of Honour, and on every side I heard men called by names that for twenty years had been part of the history of Europe. The poor Emperor lying in his coffin, guarded by men who but recently had been the great officers of an Imperial household, was a pathetic object. I noticed that his hair had turned grey; and the shortness of stature that he had been so anxious to conceal when living was now plainly apparent. His funeral, which took place on the following day, fittingly symbolised the fall of the Second Empire. Preceding the hearse walked a body of French workmen in blue blouses, the foremost of whom bore the tricolour, rudely fastened to a branch which had been hastily torn from one of the fine trees at Camden Place. Behind the hearse the young Prince Imperial walked alone, a pale, thoughtful, delicate youth, who seemed little fitted to bear the burden of the Pretendership. Behind him, in a single line, were four of his father's cousins, of whom the most conspicuous was Prince Napoleon. His likeness to the great Emperor was startling, and, as he walked bareheaded, one could see that it was emphasised by the way in which he had trained a solitary lock of hair upon his massive brow.

The Emperor was buried in a temporary vault in the Catholic chapel of Chislehurst. The building was too small to admit a tithe of the crowd of French people who were present, but those who could not enter the chapel knelt

throughout the service on the damp grass of the churchyard. When the funeral party returned to Camden House, I witnessed an unexpected and dramatic scene. The mourners had come back, as they went, in absolute silence. From highest to lowest, all seemed to be suffering from the deepest depression. The young Prince was the first to step within the door of the house. As he did so, he turned and bowed to the great company of Frenchmen—the wreckage of his father's empire. Instantly every hat was raised, and a tremendous cry went up, "*Vive Napoléon le Quatre!*" The suddenness and unexpectedness of this acclamation of the youth as the inheritor of the Napoleonic legend startled and impressed all those of us who were present as spectators.

Alas! in how brief a space of time I attended another funeral at Camden Place, and saw the body of the boy, who had thus been hailed as Emperor, carried across the breezy common to rest by his father's side. But now it was with the sad music of military bands and the pomp and glitter of an army in motion that the body was carried to the tomb. The Prince Imperial was buried with the honours due not merely to a royal prince, but to an English soldier. The Union Jack lay side by side with the tricolour upon his coffin, and four English princes acted as pall-bearers. The Queen herself watched from a pavilion erected above the wall of Camden Place the passage of the funeral party from the house to the place of burial. It was strange to think that this display of heartfelt sorrow, which was shared alike by the highest and the lowest, had been drawn forth by the death of the last representative of the Napoleonic Empire.

But one could not forget the opening words of the young Prince's will, in which he declared that he died with a heart full of gratitude to the Queen of England and her family. If that could have been the end of the Napoleonic legend it would have been a fitting one; but even on the day of the funeral of the Prince the truth that peace is seldom to be found in the houses of the great was painfully illustrated. The chief mourner was Prince Napoleon, to whom had fallen the second place only at the burial of the Emperor. When the party came out of church the Prince took a ceremonious farewell of the members of our Royal Family, and then, disregarding the entreaties of the officials that he would return to Camden Place and meet the greatly bereaved mother, leapt into his carriage and in a harsh voice cried imperiously to the driver, "*A Londres!*"

After the curtain had fallen on the great drama of the Franco-German War there was an interval during which this country was chiefly occupied with questions of domestic interest. The Gladstone Ministry had completed its great achievements. It had disestablished the Irish Church, abolished purchase in the Army, established vote by ballot, reformed the Irish land system, and, above all, had created a national system of education. To Mr. Forster had fallen the high honour of carrying this last-named measure, and it is an honour which seems even greater now than it did at the moment when the Royal assent was given in 1870 to the Education Bill. At that time, indeed, Forster met with criticism and abuse, rather than admiration and gratitude, for his great achievement. As older persons will remember, he excited the bitter hostility

of the Dissenters and a section of the Radicals because of his refusal to make a hopeless crusade against the Church schools the basis of his educational policy. Even if he had believed such a step to be just, he would have committed the gravest of errors if he had yielded to Nonconformist clamour. It would have been impossible, even in the Parliament of 1868, to have carried such a Bill as the Birmingham Education League demanded, and there has been no Parliament since then that would even have looked at such a task. Remembering this fact, the injustice of the bitter attacks made upon Mr. Forster by a certain section of the Radicals, among whom a young Birmingham manufacturer named Joseph Chamberlain was now beginning to make himself conspicuous, is manifest.

One can only account for the acerbity with which Mr. Forster was attacked on the ground that, both as a Radical and the son of Nonconformist parents, he had excited the hope among the extreme party that he himself would be as extreme as any of them. The wisdom with which he turned existing institutions to account, and succeeded in masking the batteries that the Church was ready to open upon any State system of education, was denounced as cowardice and lukewarmness; and as a consequence of the greatest triumph of his career—a triumph hardly excelled by any other Minister of our time—he became the object of the undying suspicion and hatred of a large number of the members of his own party. To the end of my days it will be a cause of pride to me that, although myself an ardent Liberal, and the son of a Nonconformist minister, I gave all the support

I could in the columns of the *Leeds Mercury* to Mr. Forster. That this support was of real importance to him was due to the fact that the *Leeds Mercury* circulated largely in Bradford, the town for which Mr. Forster sat.

My championship of Forster and his educational policy, though it had the warm support of Sir Edward Baines and of the majority of Yorkshire Liberals, brought upon me the heavy displeasure of the advanced Radicals. Like Mr. Forster, I was regarded as a traitor to my principles, and again and again in those days, when I attended public meetings, I heard the *Leeds Mercury* and its editor denounced by those who declared that the Liberalism propounded in its columns was a feeble, milk-and-water product, scarcely better than open and undiluted Toryism. Here I must pause to interject one word of grateful acknowledgment of the generous manner in which the proprietors of the *Mercury* stood by me in those stormy days, and encouraged me to give free expression to the independent opinions that I had formed. It was a time of trial for Liberalism in general, and it was also a time of trial for the young editor who, in supporting what he believed to be the truth, had thus to run counter to the convictions of a very important section of his readers. Yet, looking back, I cannot say that I suffered any substantial injury from the ordeal through which I had thus to pass. It is true that for many years I was regarded with suspicion as being only a half-hearted Liberal by a considerable section of my party in Yorkshire ; but I had the compensation of being allowed to speak my own mind, and of knowing that my words were not

I am glad to say, still survives, was Miss Louisa Berry, of Headingley, Leeds. This union brought with it settled domestic happiness, and gave me once more what I needed—solace and sympathy under my own roof. Here perhaps, as I have touched upon private affairs, is the right place to speak about my children. The eldest, John Alexander, was born in London, and is the only child of my first marriage. The other two, my daughter Eleanor and my younger son Harold, were born at Headingley, during my later Leeds life. Surely nothing to a man immersed in public work can be more helpful than the loving devotion —it was never denied to me—of those who turn what would otherwise be a mere dwelling place into a home.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW ERA IN PROVINCIAL JOURNALISM.

Bringing the *Leeds Mercury* into Line with the London Dailies—Friendship with William Black—The Dissolution of 1874—The Election at Leeds—Mr. Chamberlain's Candidature for Sheffield—Mr. Gladstone's Resignation—Election of his Successor—Birth of the Caucus—The System Described—Its Adoption at Leeds—Its Effect upon the Fortunes of the Liberal Party—The Bulgarian Atrocities Agitation.

It was in the autumn of 1873 that I undertook a formidable task as a journalist. I had long been of opinion that the provincial daily papers, if they were properly organised, might make themselves independent of the London dailies, and prevent the latter from competing with the local press. Having convinced the proprietors of the *Mercury* of the soundness of my views, I looked out for allies elsewhere. The *Manchester Guardian* was the chief rival in those days of the *Leeds Mercury* in the great district comprising East Lancashire and Yorkshire. The *Guardian* was conducted with spirit and energy, and I had been annoyed to find that it was gradually pushing its way into that which we regarded as the territory of the *Mercury*. I accordingly proposed to the local rival of the *Guardian*, the *Manchester Examiner*, that it should enter into an alliance with the *Leeds Mercury* for the improvement of both newspapers. My proposal was rejected with great promptitude by the managers of the *Examiner*. They declared

that they regarded the costly efforts that were being made by the *Guardian* to establish its pre-eminence in Lancashire as a ridiculous waste of money, and plainly intimated that they would never attempt to enter into a competition which, in their opinion, savoured of stark lunacy.

Long afterwards I remembered my negotiations with the *Examiner* when I saw that newspaper, after passing through a lingering decline, finally absorbed by its successful rival, the *Guardian*. Baffled at Manchester, I turned my eyes to another quarter. The *Glasgow Herald* suffered in Scotland from the spirited management of the *Scotsman* as we were suffering from the enterprise of the *Manchester Guardian*. I went to Glasgow and laid my proposals before the proprietors and editor of the *Herald*. After some negotiations they were accepted, and a working alliance was established between the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Glasgow Herald*, which only came to an end in 1900. We established a joint London office, with special wires to Leeds and Glasgow respectively. (I ought to say that the *Herald*, like the *Scotsman*, already had its special wire from London.) We formed a thoroughly efficient editorial staff to do the work of the London office, and we entered into an arrangement with one of the London daily papers by which we secured access to all the information it received. In this way I was able to guarantee the readers of the *Leeds Mercury* as good a supply of important London news as they could obtain in one of the London dailies. I went further than this, however, and took a step of the wisdom of which I am not now so fully convinced as I was in 1873. This was the installation of a night editor in our office

in Fleet Street, whose business it was to secure the earliest copies of the London morning papers and to telegraph from them over our private wires any special items of news that those papers contained, and that were not supplied by the ordinary agencies. The *Times* was hostile to this new departure, and we had some difficulty in getting copies of the paper for the purpose of our "morning express," as we called the new service. The other London dailies did not object. The result was that a great part of each day's issue of the *Leeds Mercury* contained all the special items of news published in the chief London newspapers of the same morning. It was a bold and audacious innovation in the methods of English journalism, and I need not say that it was one that was quickly imitated by others.

Besides making arrangements for a special report of Parliament, I extended the old London letter of the *Mercury* by securing for it a number of contributors who were interested in different fields of activity. Hitherto it had only been political. I now gave it a social and literary character as well. It was in carrying out this part of my work that I first became the intimate friend of William Black. I had met him years before, but our friendship was of the slightest until I induced him to take a leading part in the London correspondence of the *Mercury*. He was at that time assistant-editor of the *Daily News*, but he did not like the work, and was anxious to be relieved of the drudgery of nightly attendance at the office in Bouverie Street. I was able to offer him terms which justified him in relinquishing his connection with the *Daily News*. He was just

beginning his career as a brilliantly successful novelist. "A Daughter of Heth" had won the favour both of the critics and the public, and this he had followed up with "The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton." The arrangement he made with the *Leeds Mercury* enabled him to devote his time and strength to fiction, and, as I have said, it brought us into a relationship which quickly ripened into one of affectionate intimacy.

There never was a man who stood the sharp test of prosperity better than did Black. When we first became intimate he was just beginning to be known, but within a year or two from that time he had become the most popular of English novelists, and had become famous throughout the civilised world. Obscure or famous, he was just the same. To a rare simplicity of manner he added a chivalrousness of spirit that was almost an inspiration to those who were brought into contact with him. As a friend he scarcely had an equal. In all the affairs of life he would make his friend's cause his own, and fight for it with an energy and enthusiasm that few men are capable of showing, even on behalf of their own interests. At a time, for example, when he was deep in the writing of one of his own greatest novels, he voluntarily undertook the work of a dying friend as a contributor to the Press, in order to ensure the payment of his salary to the end of his life. I remember meeting him once on his way to that friend's room, carrying in one hand a hare and in the other a can containing some soup or other delicacy. He was very particular about his appearance, always smart in his dress, and rigorously observant of the social *convenances;* yet these

characteristics did not prevent his walking through the streets of London on a summer afternoon laden in this fashion. My first dinner with him was at the Pall Mall Club, in Waterloo Place, at the end of 1873. He had another young man of our own age to share the entertainment, and behind his back he spoke of this young man—who was, like himself, a Scotsman—with an enthusiastic admiration. He was an artist who had just come up to try his fortune in London, and that fortune, Black declared, could be nothing less than the Academy. He was right, for the man who made the third at that little dinner-party was the late Colin Hunter, A.R.A.

Black lived in those days in a roomy, old-fashioned house in Camberwell Grove; and here, in course of time, I spent many a pleasant evening with him. His second wife, a charming North-country lady, was, as most now know, the original of "The Princess of Thule," the heroine of the book of that name, and the portrait was far more true to life than most sketches of heroines drawn from reality are. Black's mother, a kindly old Scotswoman, justly proud of her son, was another inmate of the house. It was from her I learned that Coquette, the bewitching creature who plays the chief part in "A Daughter of Heth," had for her original Black's first wife. I discovered for myself that the author was the original of "The Whaup," and when I taxed him with it he did not deny the fact. One evening, after dinner at Camberwell Grove, we went for a walk together. When we reached the top of the Grove he drew my attention to a pleasant little villa standing in its own ground. "James Drummond,"

he said, "lives there." I wondered who James Drummond was, but said nothing. By-and-bye, as we pursued our way, he pointed out other houses, and told me the names of their occupants, all utterly unknown to me. At last I said, "Who are these people, Black? I don't know one of them." "You soon will know them, though, my boy," he answered. "Just wait and see if you don't." And sure enough, when "Madcap Violet" appeared, all the unknown personages of that night-walk at Camberwell were straightway revealed to me.

Black had an artist's eye and the soul of a poet. In general company he was shy and ill at ease. If he talked at all to strangers, he talked with nervous volubility, and too often perhaps with little meaning. In this respect he reminded one of Goldsmith. But when he was with a friend, and could open his heart freely, he gave you glimpses of a most beautiful nature, a noble sense of chivalry, and the keenest eye in the world for catching those gleams of spiritual light that sometimes illuminate even the dullest of the bare realities of life. He was always sketching his friends, and making them figure in his stories; but he did it in such a fashion that the person drawn never recognised his portrait. He once admitted that he had made use of me as a lay-figure in his literary studio, but I was never able to discover by what character I was supposed to be represented. As a rule, he was much too kind to his friends when drawing their portraits, for he liked to think the best and say the best of a man. Only once in my long friendship with him did I know him to exercise his power of making a man whom

he disliked appear odious in his pages. But this particular person was so odious in reality that everybody felt that Black had only done him justice. Of course, Black was careful to give no clue to the identity of the disagreeable man which could be of the slightest use to the general reader. A few of us knew perfectly well who was meant, but that was all. Unfortunately, the particular story in which this person figured was first published serially in an illustrated magazine, and by some extraordinary chance—or mischance—the artist, in depicting the disagreeable man, drew a portrait of the actual original that was positively startling in its likeness. No one who knew him opened the magazine without saying at once, "Why, here's a portrait of So-and-so." And yet the likeness was absolutely accidental. Black assured me that the artist knew nothing of the original disagreeable man, and had never even seen him. It was all a freak of the long arm of coincidence.

I do not know whether I may not be boring my readers in telling these little stories about works of fiction which they may never have read or have cared to read. Yet those of us who can recall the refreshment and delight which Black's earlier books spread amongst us will never allow that the shadow of eclipse that now lies upon his literary fame is either deserved or likely to prove lasting. No novelist of his century—alas! this new century has begun without William Black—had his power of painting a woman's heart and soul, or his deft grace in making the portrait at once real and ideal. I do not wish to overpraise, but the man who could draw Coquette, and Sheila, and Madcap Violet was, I hold, a master in his

craft. That he was, in a very literal sense, an artist in words, is universally admitted. There are passages in his writings which, in their power of conjuring up before the mind of the reader the scenes they describe, are not surpassed by anything that Ruskin himself ever wrote. The fact is that Black's sympathies drew him more strongly to art than to literature. If he could have had his way, I think he would rather have been a great painter than a great writer, and certainly he always loved the company of artists better than that of journalists and men of letters. He was most at his ease in the studios of his friends. He was never so full of an eager, effervescent happiness as at the private view at the Academy, when, seizing you by the arm, he would lead you from picture to picture, pointing out the merits of each, and ending up by introducing you to the artist. The artists, on their side, held him in no common esteem, and long regarded him as first of those among the writers of the day who had a real appreciation of and sympathy with art.

I must leave Black for the present, however, and return to Leeds, and the events of 1874. My special wire and London arrangements had not been long in existence before they received a most unexpected justification. One night in February, 1874, when seated in my editor's room, I received over the private wire a telegram that took my breath away. It was from our London sub-editor, announcing that Parliament was to be dissolved immediately, and that Mr. Gladstone had written a long address to the electors of Greenwich, explaining his policy and intentions. My informant added that this startling news was still a profound secret

in London, and that in all probability no other newspaper in Yorkshire would get possession of it. Everybody interested in our political history now knows the story of that bolt from the blue. It came with absolute unexpectedness, and some even of Mr. Gladstone's own colleagues in the Cabinet were taken by surprise. I know, at all events, of one member of the Ministry who was staying at the time in a country house in Yorkshire, and who, when the *Leeds Mercury*, with its announcement of the dissolution and the long address of Mr. Gladstone to the Greenwich electors, was brought to him, insisted that the paper must have been hoaxed. Mr. Gladstone had kept his secret so well that at six o'clock on the evening of the day on which he penned his manifesto there were not twenty people in all England who knew what was about to happen. So far as the *Leeds Mercury* was concerned, this startling step ensured for it a great success. No other newspaper in Yorkshire—and, if I remember rightly, only one other provincial paper in England—was able to announce the great event. The *Mercury* accompanied the manifesto with a "double-leaded" leader, and of course made the most of so precious a piece of news. Those who doubted the wisdom of the increased expenditure to which I had induced the proprietors of the paper to consent, doubted no longer.

The General Election which followed immediately upon the dissolution was a short but very bitter contest. It ended in the rout of the Liberal party, a rout almost as signal and complete as that which befel it twenty-one years later, in 1895. Mr. Disraeli, who had been nowhere at the polls in 1868,

was suddenly swept into the highest place by those "harassed interests" which Mr. Gladstone's great administration had offended by a policy that Disraeli described as one of "plundering and blundering." It was, in reality, a policy which preferred the interests of the nation to those of the privileged classes. In Leeds, where I had now, for the first time as editor of a daily newspaper, to taste the doubtful joys of a General Election, a fight of extraordinary vehemence was waged.

Leeds was one of the three-cornered constituencies created by the Reform Bill of 1867, and its representatives at the time of the dissolution were Sir Edward Baines, Mr. Carter, an advanced Radical, very popular with the working-classes, and Mr. Wheelhouse, a Conservative barrister. Sir Edward Baines was the only one of the three who had achieved a Parliamentary reputation. He had represented Leeds for fifteen years, and he was recognised as its principal citizen by the community at large. He was a total abstainer and an ardent advocate of temperance reform, but in the eyes of the fanatical supporters of the Permissive Bill he had committed the unpardonable sin in giving his adherence to Mr. Bruce's measure. So, in spite of his character and his public services, they brought out against him one of the agents of the United Kingdom Alliance. The Tories had brought out a local gentleman named Tennant as their second candidate. He was a man of many occupations, including that of a brewer. The fight which followed was the most bitter in which I have ever been engaged. Practically, Edward Baines stood alone, getting no help from Carter. The Liberal party had fallen

to pieces, and Edward Baines, as a supporter of the Government, had to bear the weight of the offence given both to the Radical Nonconformists and to the rabid teetotallers. The Alliance candidate must have known that he had no chance of winning the seat, but he persisted in his opposition to Sir Edward Baines, though the effect of defeating him would be to secure the election of the local brewer. Such are the extremes to which men allow themselves to be carried at times of excitement. The end of the struggle was the defeat of Sir Edward Baines, and the return of Carter, Wheelhouse, and Tennant. What happened in Leeds happened in a great many other places. The teetotallers deliberately wrecked the only Government which was prepared to reform the licensing system. They have had more than a quarter of a century in which to repent their folly.

It was, of course, in the Leeds election that I felt the deepest personal interest; but the *Mercury* had to take note of all the elections in Yorkshire, and some of these were of special interest. At Sheffield a candidate came forward in the extreme Radical interest whose speeches attracted some notice in Yorkshire, though they passed unobserved by the larger public beyond. This was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who now made his first attempt to win Parliamentary honours. Up to that moment I had only known Mr. Chamberlain as a young Birmingham politician who was fond of saying things both bitter and flippant, not only about his political opponents, but about the older members of his own party. He had made himself one of the fuglemen in the cry raised against Mr. Forster, towards whom he seemed to enter-

tain a feeling of almost personal antipathy. At Sheffield he made himself conspicuous by his sneers at Mr. Gladstone and almost all the recognised leaders of Liberalism. His own political opinions appeared to be based upon a crude and intolerant Radicalism of the Socialistic type. He evidently believed that promises of material benefits would enable him to win the support of the mass of the electors, and he conceived also that the best method of displacing his seniors in the party of which he was a member was to assail them with a rather coarse invective. These methods did not commend themselves to the electors of Sheffield, and Mr. Chamberlain was soundly beaten. But he had great ability, accompanied by great force of character, and all the world knows how his ability and forcefulness have since carried him to one of the highest places in political life. It is, however, not as a Radical, but as a militant Tory that he now figures before the world.

I should not have dwelt upon the Sheffield election of 1874 but for the fact that it was this election which made me one of Mr. Chamberlain's political opponents. I did not like the way in which he spoke of men who had been serving the country before he himself was born ; and, without questioning his honesty, I came to the conclusion that personal ambition played a large part in his political professions. It followed that from 1874 onwards the *Leeds Mercury* was never friendly to Mr. Chamberlain, and never gave him its confidence, even at a time when he was the idol of English Radicalism. For years I had to suffer because of this attitude towards the Birmingham politician ; and many a time, when I have been

sitting on the platform at a political meeting in Leeds, some speaker has inveighed fiercely against me because of my want of faith in Mr. Chamberlain. I had my revenge in 1885, when the Leeds Liberals swung round to my view of that gentleman, and I was hailed—quite undeservedly—as a prophet because I had always distrusted one whom they now not only distrusted, but disliked and despised.

Let me say, before leaving Mr. Chamberlain, that I still consider that the worst blot upon his political career was the manner in which he treated Mr. Forster. No doubt his dislike of Mr. Forster was in the first instance inspired by his repugnance to the Education Act; but I cannot help saying that in later years it degenerated into what, at any rate, looked like a feeling of antipathy towards the man who, at that time, was regarded as standing high in the succession to Mr. Gladstone as leader of the Liberal party. When I come to deal with the events of 1882, I shall have something to say of the part which Mr. Chamberlain played towards Mr. Forster in the painful events which issued in the latter's withdrawal from Mr. Gladstone's second Administration.

The Liberals of England were naturally very despondent after the unexpected *débâcle* of 1874. They had believed that the good works of a Government which had wrought so much for the public benefit would have been appreciated by the great mass of the electors, and they were unfeignedly astonished at the verdict returned by the country. They had not taken into account that swing of the pendulum which has so large an influence in

popular constituencies. Nor had they noted the extent to which the unity of the Liberal party, and its consequent strength, had been impaired by the action of advanced sections, who were so passionately bent upon carrying the measures in which they were themselves most deeply interested that they did not stop to count the cost of their proceedings on the fortunes of the party as a whole. It took some little time to recover our spirits after that heavy blow, but soon some of us began to feel that in time "the loppéd tree would grow again." I was helped in coming to this conclusion by some words addressed to me by a shrewd old Yorkshire Tory, which I have remembered gratefully ever since. "I suppose you Liberals really think, as the fools of the Tory newspapers seem to do, that your party is finished for ever and a day. Don't make any such mistake. A Ministry no sooner begins to live than it begins to die. Our people are in the full flush of triumph just now, but already they are beginning to die." The shrewd good sense of my friend has often struck me since, and many a time I have had occasion to notice how quickly the process of decay sets in after the formation of even the strongest Governments.

The chief event in the history of the Liberal party in the year succeeding its great defeat was the unexpected resignation by Mr. Gladstone of his post of leader. I am not concerned either to defend or to blame this episode in the career of a very great man whom I followed with enthusiasm and an unfaltering devotion for many years, but who had, as I was always conscious, some of the defects of his qualities, and whose action in a given

case could never be predicted with confidence. There is no doubt that Mr. Gladstone, old Parliamentary hand as he was, even in 1875, had a very real dislike for those personal intrigues and jealousies which play so large a part behind the scenes in our public life. It is a curious fact that for nearly forty years no intrigues were more active, and no jealousies more bitter, than those which had relation to Mr. Gladstone himself. There was always someone ready to intrigue against him. There were always those who thought that, if only he could be got out of the way, there might possibly be room for themselves upon the top of the mountain. In 1868 the representatives of this class had protested against his being allowed to become Prime Minister. In 1874 they, or their successors, were still louder in their protests against his being allowed ever again to form an administration. He was a defeated Minister, and some of them took care to bring this fact home to him in as unpleasant a way as possible. One, at least, had good reason to repent of his audacity. No one who was in the House of Commons on the memorable afternoon when Sir William Harcourt tried a fall with Mr. Gladstone, and met with such terrific punishment, is ever likely to forget the scene. It was said at the time by a humorous observer describing the debate that when Sir William—"my own Solicitor-General, I believe," as Mr. Gladstone said in describing him—had listened to the speech in which his late chief inflicted due chastisement upon him, like one of Bret Harte's heroes "he smiled a kind of sickly smile, and curled up on the floor, And the subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

Mr. Gladstone's resignation of the leadership at the beginning of 1875 was not, I think, unconnected with the fact that he knew that there were certain active spirits in the Liberal party who, believing themselves fully equal to any position to which they might be called, were unfeignedly anxious that they should have at least a chance of arriving at the front place.

Yet, when Mr. Gladstone did resign the leadership, no one named any of these intriguers as his possible successor; and it may be noted here that none of the intriguers has even yet secured the reward he coveted. The two names mentioned as those of possible leaders in 1875 were those of Mr. Forster and Lord Hartington. I name them in this order because Mr. Forster was first suggested, and the suggestion came not from any wire-pullers or clique, but from the body of Liberals as a whole. But Mr. Forster's enemies on the Opposition benches, though not very numerous, were very bitter, and they at once put forward as the strongest card they could play against Mr. Forster the name of Lord Hartington. Lord Hartington was, like Forster himself, a man of high character, to whom no taint of intrigue attached. He had not offended any section of the party in the way in which Forster had offended the Nonconformists, and, above all, he was the son and heir of the Duke of Devonshire. Social influence counts for a great deal in political life in this country, but there was another factor that also counted in favour of Lord Hartington. This was the fact that he could not sit in the House of Commons after his father's death, and that, consequently, if he were chosen, he would be more or less of a stopgap. A stopgap is, of

course, always popular with the intriguer who knows that he himself has not yet arrived.

A tremendous effort was made on behalf of Lord Hartington. I am doubtful whether it would have succeeded if the struggle had been carried to the end. Mr. Forster's friends were in earnest, and they comprised the majority of what might be called the Moderate party on the Opposition benches. But Forster himself settled the question by withdrawing from the candidature, and thus prevented an unseemly contest. It is now known that Lord Hartington himself would have taken this course if Forster had not done so. They were two straightforward, honourable rivals, and they acted throughout this business like English gentlemen. That which made the election of Lord Hartington to the leadership bitter to those who, like myself, had strongly advocated the claims of Mr. Forster, was our knowledge of the fact that he had really been defeated by the opposition of the Birmingham League, and of those Radicals who were prepared to sacrifice the larger interests of Liberalism to their own personal antipathies and sectional views.

Indeed, it may be said that with this election of Lord Hartington to the Liberal leadership the reign of the caucus commenced. The dejected Liberals were resolved, if possible, to organise victory, and at Birmingham men were found who were not only prepared to assist them in the task, but who were quite ready to assume the lead of the Liberal forces throughout the country. All the talk that one heard in political circles in those days was of caucuses on the Birmingham plan, and of the rise of the National Liberal Federation,

the existence of which people were just dimly beginning to recognise. I am not writing the history of the National Liberal Federation, and I pretend to no special knowledge on the subject of its origin. Popular opinion credits Mr. Schnadhorst, the famous organiser, of Birmingham, and subsequently of London, with the authorship of the scheme. But I doubt the truth of this. I knew Mr. Schnadhorst well, and had a great respect for him as a man at once honest, sagacious, and of much simplicity of character. But he was not intellectually great, nor was he the astute and unscrupulous Machiavelli his opponents believed him to be. The Birmingham caucus, which became a model for all other Liberal constituencies, was probably founded by the joint efforts of several men, among whom Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Powell Williams, as well as Mr. Schnadhorst, were to be counted.

The plan of the caucus was delightfully simple. A constituency—and those were the days of big constituencies—was divided into districts, and the Liberals of each district were allotted a certain number of seats on the Central Liberal Association. This Association generally consisted of so many hundreds of persons, and it thus came to pass that the Association became known as the Huddersfield Two Hundred, the Leeds Four Hundred, the Birmingham Six Hundred, and so on. On a given day in each constituency, the Liberal electors in the various districts met, and elected their representatives on the Central Association. Every known Liberal had a vote, so that the constitution of the central body was, in theory at all events, delightfully democratic. These associations were

designed to sweep away the old system of Liberal committees, influenced by local magnates, which had prevailed ever since the passing of the Reform Bill. There was a strong belief among the inventors of the caucus that by means of this plan they would secure the predominance of the advanced Radical party. The old privileges of wealth and rank were henceforth to count for nothing in the councils of Liberalism. Every man was to have a vote, not merely for a member of Parliament, but for the local body which was to select candidates, manage local political affairs, and generally determine the character of the Liberalism professed by the constituency. Every year the different Hundreds were to elect representatives who were to act as their delegates at the conferences of the National Liberal Federation; and the Federation itself was to be regarded as the legitimate and indisputable representative of the Liberalism of the country as a whole.

It was a bold and far-reaching scheme, and whatever its effect may have been in temporarily restoring the fortunes of Liberalism, its influence upon the political life of England has been great, and—I fear I must say—has not been beneficial. The founders of the caucus professed to resent the intrusion of the influence of money into political affairs. Within certain limits this was an admirable attitude. But its practical effect has been to drive the greater proportion of the moneyed classes out of the Liberal party. They further professed to wish to put an end to the influence exercised by cliques and privileged classes or persons in the party. The majority was to rule under all conceivable circumstances. Those who, like myself,

have had an active and intimate association with the caucus and the Federation know that in practice the new system, so far from destroying the rule of cliques, merely substituted one set of cliques for another. The active busybody, who had little business of his own to attend to, or to whom the position of member of a local committee was one to be striven after for the sake of the dignity attaching to it, became the ruling spirit of the caucus. In thousands of cases the older and more sober Liberals were driven out of the councils of their party in disgust, and more and more the extreme men, who were fighting in earnest for some special object or fad, became the predominant powers in Liberalism. This was the change that was gradually wrought in the Liberal party between 1875 and 1885.

At the outset I was vehemently opposed to the new methods, and protested stoutly against them in the *Leeds Mercury*. It was not very long, indeed, before I had personal experience of the way in which the caucus system worked. Mr. Carter, the Radical, who had been returned for Leeds in 1874, retired from Parliament two years later. It would have been the natural and proper course for the Liberal party to invite its former representative, Sir Edward Baines, to become a candidate for the vacancy. He was the man who undoubtedly had the chief claim upon the Liberal party in the town. A meeting of the newly-formed Liberal Association was called to consider the question of choosing a candidate. As editor of the chief Liberal paper, I had been taken into the counsels of the local Liberal leaders ever since assuming that post, had been invited to attend

the meetings of their committee, and found that they were at all times desirous of securing my support. When I spoke to one of the officials of the new Association of the meeting that was to be held to choose a candidate, and mentioned my intention of attending, I was bluntly told that I should not be admitted. I had not, it appeared, been elected a member of the Four Hundred. As a matter of fact, very few persons in Leeds had known anything about the election of this body when it took place. It was a startling revelation of the change that had taken place to be thus refused admittance to a body which, in former times, would have been only too anxious to secure my support.

The President of the Association, to whom I went to demand admittance, stood upon the strict letter of the law. I had not been elected by my district committee, which held its meetings in a local public-house, and it was therefore impossible that I should be allowed to attend the deliberations of the sacred body. Looking back, I can see that the president was absolutely justified in the line he took. It might seem absurd to shut out from a meeting of Liberals the person who, by reason of his position, had more political influence in Leeds than any other man. But "logic is logic," and under the new system any claim founded upon mere influence, or even upon past services, was inadmissible. I was too young, however, to acknowledge this fact at the time, and I bluntly delivered an ultimatum to the President of the Association. "You may hold your caucus meeting," I said, "but if it is to be private so far as I am concerned, it shall be private so far as the reporters of the

Leeds Mercury are concerned also. I shall simply ignore your proceedings, and to-morrow the *Leeds Mercury* will make its own nomination for the vacancy." This was all very wrong, I fear, and most irregular. Indeed, remembering what power the caucus system subsequently attained, I look back with something like astonishment at my own audacious action. But the caucus was still in its infancy, and my worthy friend the President, after a hurried consultation with his fellow-officials, capitulated. I was invited to be present at the meeting of the sacred body.

It was the first meeting of that description I had ever attended, but it was typical of many that I have attended since then. As I expected, it was proposed by those who had long been recognised as the leaders of the Liberal party in Leeds that Sir Edward Baines should be the candidate. Forthwith a most violent opposition was offered to the proposal by men who had never before been heard of in Leeds politics, and some of whom had only been resident in the town for a few months. I remember that the most violent of these gentlemen was a schoolmaster from Birmingham, who denounced Sir Edward Baines for the assistance he had given in the passing of that iniquitous measure, the Education Act. Another gentleman denounced him with equal violence because he was the proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*, a journal which had dared to speak disrespectfully of the truest and most honest Liberal of the day, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. That was the first occasion on which my fellow-Liberals in Leeds belaboured me with the name of Mr. Chamberlain. On all sides I heard extreme opinions expressed by men

whose faces and names were quite unfamiliar to me, and I found to my dismay that the more extreme the opinions, the warmer was their reception by these representative Liberals. They would hardly listen to their old leaders, who had grown grey in fighting the battles of Liberalism. They treated with contumely any words of soberness or moderation. They applauded even speakers who were palpably selfish and insincere. As I listened to that debate, my eyes were opened, and I realised the fact that a great revolution had been suddenly and silently wrought, and that the control of the Liberal party had, in a great measure, passed out of the hands of its old leaders into those of the men who managed the new "machine." If I have been tedious in telling this story of the caucus, it is still, I feel, one that is worth telling, for it illustrates one, at least, of the great changes in the political conditions of this country that have happened during my lifetime.

It was not, of course, Sir Edward Baines who was chosen as the Liberal candidate. The choice of the caucus fell upon the worthy President of that body, the late Sir John Barran, an amiable man and a good citizen, though his claims to Parliamentary distinction at that time were certainly unequal to those of Sir Edward Baines. The revolution had taken place, however, and the Liberal party found itself under the command of new masters. For some time after the establishment of the caucus, it pursued a distinctly aggressive course, and inspired all of us with alarm. In course of time, however, I realised the fact that there were certain severe limitations upon its power. It could not stand against the country

when the country was in earnest. It could not give that inspiration to a party without which victory cannot be achieved. No amount of organisation, however skilfully devised, could supply the place of a great popular movement. I became reconciled to the caucus when I grasped these facts, and for a time I not only looked upon it as harmless, but gave my assistance to it, locally in Leeds and, in its national work, in the office of the National Liberal Federation. Yet I am compelled to confess now that, though I have not altered my view as to the limitations of the power of the party machine, I no longer regard it as harmless.

It is, I think, impossible to deny that very great harm has been done, not merely to the spirit of Liberalism, but to the actual fortunes of the Liberal party, by the new system. It has brought a new spirit into the direction of our party, a spirit which is too apt to regard the catching of votes as the one great object to be pursued and attained, no matter by what means. It has given the mere machine man, the intriguer and wire-puller, far greater power than it is right that he should possess, seeing that as a rule his power is not accompanied by a corresponding degree of responsibility. Above all, it has lowered the status of a member of Parliament, and made him more or less of a delegate who is bound to yield to the wishes, not of his constituents as a whole, but of the party organisation which seeks to usurp the place of the constituency. The story of the struggles of Mr. Forster with the Bradford caucus is familiar to political students. I was mixed up with all those struggles, and always on

the side of Mr. Forster, who stoutly refused to accept the dictation of the caucus and the theory that a member of Parliament was no more than a delegate. He was victorious in his prolonged struggle with the Bradford Radicals, but he only succeeded in virtue of his own strength of character and dogged courage. Weaker men went to the wall by scores, and, as they did so, the caucus, of which Mr. Chamberlain was at this time the ruling spirit, gained strength, and became the predominant factor in the Liberal party.

In the early autumn of 1876 the most remarkable political agitation I ever witnessed broke over the country with startling suddenness. Parliament was just on the point of rising when the *Daily News* published its first account of the hideous crimes which became known as the Bulgarian atrocities. Mr. Disraeli, when questioned in the House of Commons, sneered at the reports in the *Daily News* as being based upon "coffee-house babble." If he really believed this, he must have been strangely ill-informed. The terrible tale which shocked the civilised world was communicated to the *Daily News* by its Constantinople correspondent, Mr. Edwin Pears. The man who supplied Mr. Pears with the terrible facts which he gave to the world was Dr. Washbourne, the head of the Robert College at Constantinople. I know both Mr. Pears and Dr. Washbourne. They are men of the highest honour and integrity, whilst Dr. Washbourne, who is by birth an American, has been for many years the best authority on the question of the treatment of the Christians of the Ottoman Empire by the Sultan. No one who

knew the source from which the *Daily News* stories emanated could dream of dismissing those stories as coffee-house babble. Mr. Disraeli, as a matter of duty, should have made himself acquainted with the authority on which these stories rested before he took it upon himself to denounce them as sensational fables. But in spite of Mr. Disraeli, who at this very moment blossomed into the Earl of Beaconsfield, an official investigation took place. Mr. Walter Baring, who was attached to our Constantinople Embassy, was directed to proceed to the scene of the alleged outrages, and to inquire into the truth of the allegations made in the *Daily News*. Mr. Baring was an English official of the best stamp. He not only ascertained the truth, but he reported it in plain language to the Home Government. It was then found that the *Daily News* had, if anything, understated the case. The ruffianly Bashi-Bazouks, employed by the Sultan to keep down the Christians of European Turkey, had been let loose upon the people of certain villages in Bulgaria and Roumelia, as a pack of wolves might have been let loose upon a flock of sheep.

The crimes that were committed do not admit of description. Thousands of innocent people had been murdered in circumstances of atrocious cruelty. Neither age nor sex had been respected. Indeed, children, old men, and women seemed to be the favourite victims of the savages. Upon the women every conceivable outrage was perpetrated before the knife of the assassin cut short their misery. It was a story which, when told in the dry, official language of a Foreign Office report, was still sufficient to arouse a passion of righteous rage in the

breast of any person endowed with the ordinary instincts of humanity. The old fear of Russia as our rival in Eastern Europe still constituted the chief influence in determining our foreign policy, and the old idea of the Turk as our friend and ally was still popular amongst us. But these revelations for the moment reversed the national feeling on both these points. Mr. Gladstone, roused to action by his sympathy with the victims of so cruel an oppression, left his retirement at Hawarden and issued a pamphlet on the Bulgarian horrors which raised the feeling of the country to a higher point than I have ever known it reach before or since, except in some crisis affecting our very existence as a State.

That month of September, 1876, saw England and Scotland convulsed with a terrible emotion. The old divisions of parties were effaced, and the Government, because of its suspected sympathy with the Sultan, found itself the object of almost universal execration. Naturally, the less discreet politicians of the day were unable to control themselves under the influence of the prevailing excitement. Many foolish and many dangerous things were uttered at the meetings at which every town and village gave expression to the horror inspired by the Sultan's crimes. Mr. Gladstone's strongest utterances were seized upon by his fervent admirers and were carried to an extreme from which he himself would have shrunk. It was a whirlwind, a tornado of political passion that swept over the country during those sunny September weeks. The impulse from which it sprang was just and noble in itself; but who can hold a whirlwind in check? It is not wonderful that this great

outbreak of national indignation did almost as much harm as good.

The whole condition of our domestic politics was changed by this Bulgarian atrocities agitation, as it was called. It riveted the attention of the country upon a great question of foreign policy. It weakened enormously, for the moment, the power of the Tory Government, which still enjoyed so commanding a majority in Parliament. Domestic affairs lost their savour for the ordinary elector, and, writing nearly a quarter of a century after this episode, I am inclined to believe that they have never since regained all that they then lost. In the late autumn, a Conference on the subject of our relations with Turkey was held in St. James's Hall. This was no demonstration on the part of a caucus, but a gathering of the notables of all the great towns of England. No doubt the majority of those present were Liberals, but a very considerable minority were Conservatives who had hitherto supported the Government. It was my good fortune to be present at that wonderful meeting in St. James's Hall. Never was there such a political platform seen at a public meeting before. Mr. Gladstone, Lord Shaftesbury, the Dukes of Westminster and Argyll, Mr. Freeman, the historian, the Bishop of Oxford, Henry Fawcett—these are but a few of the names that occur to my memory as I recall the memorable scene. Great Tory noblemen like the Marquess of Bath sat side by side with Radicals from Birmingham, and the passionate earnestness, amounting to something more than enthusiasm, that inspired the whole gathering was remarkable. It may be said to have

marked the high tide of political agitation in my own experience.

A simple accident had saved me from the full force of the contagion of passion that swept over the country in September. I had left Leeds to spend some weeks with my family in a house on the Clyde, where I was far from the sounds of political tumult. Possibly, if I had stayed in Leeds at my post at the *Mercury* office, I might have gone with the tide, and might have been just as extreme and as reckless as anybody else. But I looked on from a distance, and, as it happened, I was absorbed at the time in other work. The consequence was that I could see the evil, as well as the good, of this extraordinary upheaval of popular emotion, and when I returned later on to my work at Leeds I took a cooler view of the whole question than most Liberal journalists did, and dealt with it, not from the merely emotional standpoint, but from that of our duty and interests as a people. Of course, I was blamed for this by the more fervent, and was suspected of being at heart little better than a philo-Turk. I had, in short, to meet the usual fate of the man who will not cry either black or white when it is his misfortune to see only a confusion of colours. By-and-by, however, when the popular passion subsided, and the old alarm about Russia again became rampant, I found myself blamed for precisely the opposite reason. I was no longer assailed as a philo-Turk, but as a Russophil.

CHAPTER X.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BRONTË LITERATURE.

A Visit to Haworth—Feeling Against the Brontës in Yorkshire—Miss Nussey and her Discontent with Mrs. Gaskell's "Life"—Publication of "Charlotte Brontë: a Monograph"—Mr. Swinburne's Appreciation—An Abortive Visit to the Poet—Lecture on Emily Brontë and "Wuthering Heights"—Miss Nussey's Visit to Haworth after Charlotte's Marriage.

I HAVE said that during the stormy days of the atrocities agitation I was engaged in other work than that of political writing. This was the completion of a little book in which I gave my impressions of Charlotte and Emily Brontë to the public. The story of Charlotte Brontë, as told by Mrs. Gaskell, had always possessed a great fascination for me. I had been moved to write to Mrs. Gaskell when her biography of Charlotte appeared, and I had received from her more than one letter filled with interesting details about Charlotte's father, and his life after his daughter's death. When I went to Leeds in 1866, the first pilgrimage I made was to Haworth. That was less than eleven years after Charlotte's death, and at a time when there were, of course, many persons still living in the village who had a perfect recollection of the wonderful sisters. But, strange to say, Haworth was not in those days a popular "shrine." "Whiles some Americans come to see the church, but nobody else," was the statement

made to me when I asked the sexton if there were many visitors to the home of the Brontës.

My visit furnished me with a theme for a descriptive article which was printed in *Chambers's Journal* in 1867, and, having written it, I believed that my connection with the Brontës was at an end. But when I went back to Leeds in 1870, I was struck by the fact that throughout the West Riding of Yorkshire there prevailed a widespread feeling that was nothing less than one of positive antipathy to the works and the story of the Brontës. Their books, though they dealt with local scenes and characters, were no longer read. In that respect, however, the West Riding hardly differed from the rest of England. What was peculiar to Yorkshire was the fact that, if you mentioned the name of Brontë in any average company, the chances were in favour of your being met with an indignant snort from someone who protested that Charlotte's stories were a disgraceful libel upon the district, and that "Wuthering Heights" was a book so dreadful in its character that its author would only have met with her deserts if she had been soundly whipped for writing it. I met more than one lady who had known the Brontës, and who, in reply to my eager questioning, spoke of them with undisguised contempt. I was assured that they were not ladies, that they were not even successful as governesses, that their father and brother were a pair of reprobates, and that they themselves, being embittered by the fact that they were not admitted to the good society of their neighbourhood, had deliberately revenged themselves by writing scurrilous libels and caricatures in order to bring Yorkshire

men and women into contempt. It all seems incredible now; yet this was the actual state of feeling prevalent in Yorkshire with regard to the Brontës thirty years ago.

I was asked to deliver a lecture before some literary society in Leeds, and it seemed to me that I could not do better than tell the story of the Brontës, and defend them against the aspersions cast upon them by their old neighbours. Accordingly, I wrote a lecture which was the foundation of the little book I subsequently published on the same subject. Miss Nussey, Charlotte's schoolfellow and bosom friend, and the "dear E." of Mrs. Gaskell's "Life," was then living at Birstall, near Leeds. She heard of my lecture through some mutual friend, and expressed a desire to be allowed to read it. After having done so, she asked me to visit her—a request with which I gladly complied. I found her a cheerful, neat, and well-preserved woman, who, though she was well advanced in middle life, retained a good deal of the charm of manner with which Caroline Helstone, in the delightful story of "Shirley," is endowed.

I am well aware that the identity of Ellen Nussey and Caroline Helstone has been questioned by some recent writers, and that Mr. Nicholls, who was for a few months Charlotte Brontë's husband, is quoted in support of this denial. All I can say is, first, that Miss Nussey acknowledged to me the truth of the statement that she had served as a model for Caroline Helstone, just as Emily Brontë served as a model for Shirley herself; and secondly, that it was impossible for anyone to know Miss Nussey in those

days without seeing how vivid and truthful Charlotte's portrait of her was. Almost her first words to me when I met her expressed her regret that Mrs. Gaskell had not done justice to Charlotte's life and character in her famous Memoir. To me this was rank heresy, for, like most other persons, I was indebted to Mrs. Gaskell for nearly all the knowledge I then possessed of the Brontë story. But, in reply to my defence of Mrs. Gaskell, Miss Nussey entered into particulars. She explained to me that Mrs. Gaskell had mixed up the sordid and shameful story of Branwell Brontë with that of his sisters; and she protested against the way in which local traditions, that had nothing to do with the character of the gifted sisters, in whom there was not a single drop of Yorkshire blood, had been imported into Mrs. Gaskell's narrative, as though these traditions were in some way connected with the lives of the Brontës. Finally, she declared that she would not rest satisfied until a book had been written about Charlotte which toned down the over-colouring of Mrs. Gaskell's narrative, and she asked me if I was prepared to write such a book.

It was a flattering proposal, but I felt compelled to decline it. I was well aware that I could not put myself into competition with Mrs. Gaskell, even if I desired to do so, and I had no wish to appear to attack a book which I regarded as one of the masterpieces of English biography. But Miss Nussey was persistent, and she offered me the use of all Charlotte's correspondence with her, including the letters relating to her courtship and marriage, which Mrs. Gaskell had never even seen. After I had

read these letters and other documents with which Miss Nussey furnished me, I suggested that, if I could not write a book, I might still make one or two interesting magazine articles out of the materials in my possession. Miss Nussey embraced this idea with enthusiasm, protesting that so long as she could see Charlotte "set right" in the eyes of the world, she would be perfectly satisfied with anything I chose to do. Accordingly, in the spring of 1866, I wrote three articles which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*. I wrote them with fear and trembling, and I must add that I wrote them without any kind of encouragement from outside, other than that which I received from Miss Nussey herself. The general impression among the editors and critics of the day was that there was nothing new to be said about the Brontës, and that, even if there were, the public would not care to hear it. The kind and genial editor of *Macmillan's Magazine* himself—Sir George Grove—shared this conviction, and it was only at the urgent request of William Black, through whom I approached him, that he agreed to look at my articles. However, having seen them, he liked them, and wrote to me warmly in their praise. Nor did the public like them less, if Sir George Grove was correct in his statement that these contributions of mine about the author of "Jane Eyre" had done more to increase the sale of the magazine than any article since Mrs. Stowe's famous defamation of Lord Byron.

Nor did the matter end, as I thought it would have done, with the publication of my articles in *Macmillan's*. I received a summons from the famous head of that firm of publishers,

Mr. Alexander Macmillan; and, attending him in the deferential manner in which authors in those days waited upon important publishers, was asked with characteristic gruffness if I could add enough to the articles to make a book. "The public," said Mr. Macmillan, in tones which made me feel my own insignificance, "seems to want something more of the stuff; I really don't know why. But if you can do something more, we'll make a book of it." Then he named the honorarium I was to receive in payment both for the magazine articles and the volume. It was a modest sum—only a hundred pounds, and of this I felt that Miss Nussey was entitled to a considerable share. But a hundred pounds was not to be despised. Besides, I loved my subject, and knew that I had still something left to say about it. So I closed with Mr. Macmillan's offer, and a few months later my little book, "Charlotte Brontë: a Monograph," was duly published.

It will be seen that it was by accident rather than design that I wrote the book. Miss Nussey moved me to the writing of the magazine articles; Mr. Macmillan urged me to expand them into a volume. Otherwise I should have written nothing on the subject, and it would have been left to somebody else to start that Brontë cult which has since spread so widely. The appearance of the volume marked an important epoch in my life. Yet, in the first instance, "Charlotte Brontë" was very coldly received by the critics. Most of them seemed to think that the book was entirely superfluous. They evidently shared Mr. Macmillan's surprise that anybody should think such a volume was needed. Most of them also agreed that I had

no special qualifications for the task I had undertaken, and that the new matter I had brought to light was of little value. One of my critics, the *Athenæum*, poured contempt upon me for having spoken of "the scent of the heather." The ingenuous writer evidently had seen heather nowhere save on the slab of a fishmonger's shop. But, in spite of the critics, the book sold, and sold rapidly. It went through three editions in this country within a few weeks of its publication. It was republished in America by arrangement with the Macmillans, and had so large a sale there that it was speedily pirated, the pirates not even having the decency to give my name upon the title-page.

Snubbed as I felt myself to be, I still had my reward. People who had read the book wrote to me in enthusiastic terms, and they were not all Americans who did so. I speedily became aware that I had, almost by accident, tapped a vein of pure and rich sentiment. Best of all was the fact that my kind friend, Lord Houghton, forwarded to me a letter he had received from Mr. Swinburne which contained the following passage: "Has anyone told you I am just about to publish a 'Study' on Charlotte Brontë, which has grown out of all proportion to the thing it was meant to be—a review of (or article on) Mr. Wemyss Reid's little jewel and treasure-casket of a book?" Need I say that I was more than consoled for the coldness of the reception which the Press had given to my first literary essay by such words as these; nor had I long to wait before I saw the Brontë cult a great and growing factor in our literary life. The critics could not ignore Mr.

Swinburne, and when his "Note" on Charlotte Brontë appeared, they were compelled to discuss seriously the question which they had previously regarded as superfluous or trivial.

At Mr. Swinburne's request I subsequently went to see the distinguished poet at the rooms he occupied in Great James Street. My reception was not what I had expected, though Mr. Swinburne cannot be blamed for the fact. I was kept waiting on the doorstep, after ringing the bell, for an unusually long time, and during the interval of waiting a tradesman's boy arrived, basket on arm. He was more impatient than I was, and rang the bell violently to quicken the movements of those within, evidently careless as to whether he might be disturbing a poet's daydream. A terrible old woman, with landlady written large all over her face and person, opened the door, and, without paying the slightest attention to me, began to rate the shopboy in no measured terms. He retaliated in the same fashion, and I found myself quite unheeded in the midst of this war of words. At last, tired of waiting, I interposed between the boy and the landlady, and asked the latter if Mr. Swinburne was at home. She looked at me with withering contempt for a few seconds, and then ejaculated, "No, he ain't, and it would be a good thing for him if he never was when the likes of you come to call on him." Having delivered herself of this hospitable sentence, she slammed the door in my face, and left me a sadder man. I never dared to face that lady again, and in consequence I missed the pleasure of making Mr. Swinburne's acquaintance at that time.

I was elected about this time a member of the Savile Club, which then had its home in Savile Row. My proposer was Mr. J. F. McLennan, the author of "Primitive Marriage," and I owed my immediate election chiefly to his good offices, but partly to the fact that my book on Charlotte Brontë had found favour with the reading public. A great deal has been written since then about the Brontës. Some of our ablest literary critics have discussed their genius with a penetrating insight that has opened up for us the secrets of their wonderful laboratory, whilst industrious investigators have brought to light many facts which were unknown to Mrs. Gaskell at the time when she wrote her famous Memoir. A Brontë Society has been formed in Yorkshire, and no man would now be justified in maintaining either that the Brontës are not fully appreciated in the world of letters, or that in their own county their fame is neglected or despised. I myself have added very little to the literature which has been poured forth upon the subject since the appearance of Mr. Swinburne's "Note." I shrank from doing so, because I was not in sympathy with the public curiosity which aspired to know everything that there was to tell about the Brontës without regard to its intrinsic interest, or to that decent reticence which even the dead have a right to expect from us. I did not, for example, in my "monograph" publish the remarkable letters in which Charlotte told Miss Nussey the story of her strange love affair with Mr. Nicholls. Mr. Nicholls was still living, and I felt that these letters could not decently be published during his lifetime. Twenty years later, however, they were published by Mr. Shorter,

not only during the lifetime of Mr. Nicholls, but with that gentleman's full consent.

My chief contribution to the Brontë controversy after the publication of the "monograph" was a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution in 1895 on Emily Brontë and the authorship of "Wuthering Heights," in which I set forth the theory that Emily had, in part, been inspired in her description of the mad Heathcliffe and his terrible ravings by the bitter experiences through which she passed as an eye-witness of her brother Branwell's last days. My theory has met with a certain amount of acceptance among Brontë students, and I still adhere to it as the most probable explanation of a literary problem of no common difficulty.

Once, somewhere between 1890 and 1896, I was compelled to take up the pen in my own defence. I read in the *North American Review* an article entitled "The Defamation of Charlotte Brontë," and to my great amazement found that it was a vicious attack upon my little book published more than twenty years previously! I was accused by the writer—an American lady whose name I had never heard before and have now forgotten—of having been the first to defame Charlotte Brontë, because I had been the first to point out the singular influence over her life and character which was exercised by her teacher in Brussels, M. Héger. It is now obvious to everybody that this gentleman was not only the original of the Paul Emanuel of "Villette," but was in many respects the inspiring influence in the whole of Charlotte Brontë's career as a writer. That he exercised a curious

fascination over the untrained young woman who went to Brussels in order to improve her knowledge of French we know from her own declarations, nor is it surprising that a man of such genuine intellectual force should have exercised this influence over the mind of one who, until she met him, had known nothing whatever of intellectual society. It was not only my right, but my duty, as a critic to point out the important part which M. Héger had played in the development of Charlotte Brontë's genius, and there was most assuredly nothing in what I said that touched in the slightest degree the purity of her exalted character. Yet my critic in the *North American Review* professed to discover that I had invented the story that Charlotte had "fallen in love" with her teacher in Brussels, and abused me soundly for having degraded her by presenting her to the world in an odious light. Surely it is a mad world that can thus misconstrue obvious and innocent facts! I cannot but think, however, that the good lady of the *North American Review* was more anxious to figure in the great Brontë controversy than to contribute anything of value to our knowledge of the subject.

As I have said already, when I first wrote about the Brontës there were many still living who had known the sisters well. Of these Miss Nussey was the chief, and it may be of interest to repeat a few of the statements which from time to time she made to me with regard to Charlotte. One of the most striking of these was her account of the single visit which she paid to Haworth after Charlotte became the wife of Mr. Nicholls. Miss Nussey told me that she accompanied Charlotte and her

husband one day on a walk over the moors. In the course of their conversation she asked Charlotte if she was writing another book. "No," replied Charlotte; "Arthur says I have no time for writing now, as I must attend to my duties as a clergyman's wife." She said it in such a tone as to convince her friend that she was not satisfied with her husband's decision, and Miss Nussey, plucking up her courage, remonstrated with him upon his refusal to allow Charlotte to exercise her great gift. Mr. Nicholls's response was short and to the point. "I did not marry Currer Bell, the novelist, but Charlotte Brontë, the clergyman's daughter. Currer Bell may fly to heaven to-morrow for anything I care." I do not vouch for the absolute truth of this story, but I give it as I heard it from Miss Nussey, and I am quite sure that when she told it to me she believed it to be true.

Charlotte must have been more attractive than the world at one time believed her to have been, for she had several offers of marriage before Mr. Nicholls appeared upon the scene as a suitor. Mrs. Smith, the mother of Mr. George Smith, her publisher, was somewhat alarmed at the possibility of her son's admiration for Charlotte's genius developing into an affection for her, and whilst very kind to the young authoress, she let her see that in her opinion Mr. Smith was much too young to become her husband. In one of her letters to Miss Nussey, Charlotte discussed this situation, and with her characteristic candour and good sense came to the conclusion that Mrs. Smith was altogether right. Her son was both too young and too brilliant, she declared, to make

a fitting husband for the obscure parson's daughter. In "Villette," where the story of her own heart is told, Mrs. Smith and her son are to be found portrayed in the characters of Mr. John and his mother.

Charlotte Brontë's fame, her genius, her power, live after her in her books, and so long as those books are read will never be forgotten. But it is not her fame, her genius, her power, which are the most precious possessions she has left to us, but that sweetness and virtue, which like bright flowers bloom upon her grave and remind us of the life which lies beyond it.

CHAPTER XI.

VISITS TO THE CONTINENT.

Politics in Paris in 1877—An Oration by Gambetta—the Balloting—The Republic Saved—Gambetta's Funeral—A Member of the Reform Club—The Century Club—A Draught of Turpentine and Soda—The "Press Gang" at the Reform—James Payn and William Black—George Augustus Sala and Sir John Robinson—Disraeli's Triumph in 1878—A European Tour.

In the autumn of 1877 I went over to Paris, in order to watch the General Election of that year. It was a fateful moment in the history of France. The Royalists, and the whole of the anti-Republican forces, were bent upon overthrowing the Republic, and they looked upon President Macmahon as their tool. Thiers, the natural leader of the Republican party, had died, after a brief illness, within a few weeks of the election; and Gambetta, who had stepped into his place, was not only under prosecution for his famous "*Ou se soumettre ou se démettre*" speech, but was still regarded by a large section of moderate men as a wild man, a *fou furieux*, indeed, who could not be trusted with the fortunes of the party. Every morning the Parisians awoke to wonder whether the expected *coup d'état* had taken place during the night. The drama had clearly reached an exciting moment, and I thought it well to witness the *dénouement* for myself.

My kind friend Lord Houghton, on learning my intention, sent me a batch of introductions

to many of the leading men in Paris. They included the Comte de Paris himself, M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, the bosom friend of M. Thiers, and M. Blowitz, of the *Times*. I did not see a revolution, because none took place ; but I had an excellent opportunity of watching Paris pass through a political crisis, and of witnessing the triumph of the Republic over its numerous and formidable enemies. That year (1877) was indeed the best year in the history of the Republic. It still had the support of the great mass of the public. The middle-class gave it all their aid, and the combination of Thiers and Gambetta had made the Left and Left Centre parties immensely powerful. It was interesting to watch the beginnings of the clerical reaction, beginnings which found their outward expression in the propagation of the cult of the Sacred Heart. All Paris was singing in those days, either in the original or in a parody, the hymn with the refrain, "Heaven save poor France in the name of the Sacred Heart." On the whole, the parodists were in a majority, and their parodies were just as blasphemous as one expects them to be in France.

Through M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, a typical French statesman of the philosophical cast, I secured an invitation to the solitary meeting which Gambetta, as candidate for Belleville, was permitted to hold prior to the actual election. He was, as I have said, under remand in the prosecution by which the Government had sought to silence his voice in the Chamber of Deputies. They could not prevent his making this one speech to his constituents, for the law gave him the right to do so, and the meeting was therefore one of

great importance. Gambetta spoke in a large circus which was crowded to excess. He was received with great enthusiasm, but before his speech was over he had wound up his audience to a still higher pitch of passionate fervour. He struck me as being, in some respects, the greatest of all the orators I had ever heard. He had that indispensable qualification of the orator, a voice at once clear, powerful, and melodious. His magnificent physique gave weight to the gestures in which he indulged so freely, and which enabled him to conceal the infirmity from which he suffered —blindness of one eye—whilst at the same time allowing him always to keep his living eye fixed on the crowd before him.

I trembled for him when he began his great speech, for, unlike any English orator I ever heard, he did not warm to his subject gradually, taking care to make his audience accompany him step by step, but sprang in a moment to a height of passionate and tempestuous eloquence from which it seemed inevitable that he must quickly fall to an anti-climax. But no anti-climax came. For more than an hour he continued to pour forth a torrent of burning words that seemed to keep the vast multitude before him in a state of excitement and enthusiasm hardly to be exaggerated. Never before and never since have I witnessed such an effect as this produced by an orator, and though he lacked the stately and sonorous delivery of John Bright, and had no pretension to the intellectual persuasiveness of Mr. Gladstone, I have always felt, since hearing that speech, that Gambetta was the greatest orator to whom I ever listened.

It was rumoured that Gambetta was to be arrested on leaving the meeting, and he himself believed this rumour to be true. Yet this did not cause him to moderate his defiance of the Government and the reactionary powers. I remember he closed his great oration with words to the following effect: "I said in the Chamber not long ago, 'Clericalism, that is the enemy.' I predict now that when this election is over, I shall say, 'Clericalism, that is the vanquished.'" I was introduced to him after his speech. He was lying on a couch in a little green room at the back of the stage of the circus, panting, and fanning himself furiously with his pocket-handkerchief, whilst one of his friends administered to him copious draughts of champagne. He talked to me of the probability of his arrest on leaving the building, but seemed absolutely confident as to the future. The Government made no attempt, however, to interfere with him, and but a few weeks later he was the ruling power in France.

The day on which the first ballot was taken was, according to French custom, a Sunday. This was the day on which the quidnuncs had fixed as the probable date of the *coup d'état*. The Conservatives, on the other hand, pretended to believe that it would witness a fresh Communist rising, of which Belleville was to be the centre. It was a beautiful September day, and the excitement which possessed the whole French people was visibly reflected in the streets of Paris. I spent the whole day in driving from one polling station to another, accompanied by a friend who had resided for many years in the French capital. What struck one was the good order that was

everywhere maintained, and the simplicity of the arrangements for voting. There was nothing like the tumult that would have been witnessed in any ordinary general election in England. It was obvious, too, that much less care was taken to preserve the secrecy of the ballot than is customary in this country.

As a newspaper correspondent I was freely admitted into every polling station. It was not until two o'clock in the afternoon that I reached Belleville, the reputed storm-centre. I had been warned that it would be dangerous to venture into that district in the handsome carriage provided for me by my friend. Yet when I climbed the steep hill leading to the polling station where the Maire presided, I found everything perfectly quiet. On entering the ballot-room, however, I was received in a somewhat curious fashion by the Maire. "So you have come at last to poor calumniated Belleville," he said. "You are the first journalist who has been here to-day, and yet for a week past every journal in Paris has declared that we were going to break out into a revolution. If they really believed it, why did they not come and see how we behaved ourselves? I call it infamous." The worthy Maire would hardly be pacified by the thought that I, at least, had not been guilty of staying away. But one could sympathise with his feelings, for in this spot, regarding which the wildest stories were current in the Parisian Press, dulness reigned supreme, and the polling station itself was as solemn and as silent as a Quakers' meeting house.

It was different at night, when the first news of the result of the election poured into Paris from

the provinces, and it was seen that Gambetta had been a true prophet, after all, and that Clericalism, and all the other reactionary forces, had indeed been vanquished. Between ten o'clock and midnight the long line of the boulevards was crowded with the gayest multitude of men, women, and children that I ever met. They cheered, they shouted, they sang for joy. The Republic had triumphed, and France was saved. This was the burden of their song. Never did I see a more good-natured crowd; but things would have been different if that historic election had resulted otherwise. Paris was delighted and good-humoured because she had won.

Five years after that great victory for Gambetta and the Republic I found myself again in Paris on a cold January day. All the town was once more in the streets, but there was no gladness on the faces of the people who crowded the Place de la Concorde and the long avenue of the Rue de Rivoli. They had gathered together to witness the funeral of the hero of the fight of 1877. Gambetta, wounded, whether by accident or design none can tell, by his dearest friend, had died at the very zenith of his fame, and all France was prepared to render homage to one of her greatest sons. His body lay in state in the palace of the Chamber of Deputies, and I was fortunate enough to find myself standing at the foot of the coffin at the same moment as Victor Hugo. The great poet had his two grandchildren clinging to his hands, and as he stood there, explaining to the children something of Gambetta's story and achievements, I could not help feeling that there was a fine opening for a historical painter.

Gambetta's funeral was notable above everything else for the profusion of the display of flowers. Every department, every town and hamlet in France, had sent a deputation to swell the solemn procession, and every deputation brought a colossal funeral wreath. It was the first week in January, yet the air was heavy with the perfume of violets, lilies, and white lilac. It was computed at the time that twenty thousand pounds was expended on the flowers borne by the mourners, and I do not think that this calculation was exaggerated. Yet the funeral itself was extremely dull and unimpressive. Those long lines of men in evening dress impressed nobody. It was only when the picked troops went by in their glittering uniforms that any emotion was displayed by the watching crowd. For the rest, all our attention and admiration were given to the colossal wreaths and crowns and chaplets of which there was so barbaric a profusion, and the poor coffin itself passed almost unnoticed.

It was different a week later, when the statesman's real funeral took place. His father, a simple *bourgeois* of Provence, had agreed to allow this mock funeral to take place in Paris on condition that his son's body was subsequently given to him for burial among his own people at Nice. I was present also at this second funeral. There were no flowers and there was but little display; but behind the coffin in which the body of the ill-starred political leader lay walked his father, bare-headed, his white hair streaming in the breeze; and the women around me cried as he passed, "Ah, le pauvre papa!" and wiped the furtive tear from their

eyes. If anything could have inspired me with a greater horror for the pomp of a public funeral, it would have been the contrast presented by this simple but pathetic ceremony at Nice with the gorgeous spectacle of a few days before in Paris.

In the spring of 1878 I became a member of the Reform Club, Mr. Forster and Mr. Childers being my sponsors. Then, as now, there was a black-balling clique in the club, and nobody could be absolutely certain of election; but my personal friends—among whom William Black was foremost—worked hard on my behalf, and secured my election in spite of the fact that I had a considerable number of black-balls. Personal influence, indeed, goes further than anything else in securing admission to a club like the Reform. It is a mistake to trust to the mere eminence of a man's proposer and seconder; unless he has some personal friend who is a popular member of the club, and who will take the trouble to exert himself on the day of the election, the mere eminence of his proposer and seconder will not save him. One of the traditions of the Reform Club relates to George Augustus Sala. When that well-known writer was proposed for election, the taint of Bohemianism still clung to him, and it was very doubtful whether he would pass the ordeal of the ballot. Thackeray, with whom Sala had been associated in the early days of the *Cornhill Magazine*, believed that election to a club like the Reform would be the salvation of the younger man; and on the day when the ballot took place he remained in the saloon at the head of the steps for four mortal hours, asking every member as he entered to vote for Sala as a personal favour to himself.

In this way he defeated the black-balling clique, and secured Sala's admittance to society of a somewhat graver type than that to which he had heretofore been accustomed.

Even in 1878 I was not unversed in London clubs. I had been a member of the Arundel, where the dramatists and journalists of the last generation were wont to assemble; of the Thatched House, which in those days had an admirable *chef;* of the Savile, the home of cultured authorship; and of the Devonshire, founded after the Liberal defeat in 1874 as a kind of Junior Reform Club. I had, in addition, belonged to several more or less Bohemian clubs, of which the Century, in Pall Mall Place, is perhaps the only one that demands notice. The Century was founded on the model of the Cosmopolitan. The members met twice a week—on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. Tobacco, spirits, and aërated waters were provided out of the club funds. The members sat in a semicircle round the fireplace, and were expected to talk together without waiting for the formality of an introduction. The rules, in short, were the same as at the familiar "Cos.," and for a time the club was very successful. But it seems almost inevitable that clubs of this description should drift, sooner or later, into the hands of a clique. The same men went every night, and you had to listen to the same platitudes, or the same cheap cynicism. Once or twice the dulness of the evening at the Century was enlivened by something like a scene. One night, for example, Henry Fawcett, the blind politician and statesman, came into the club room after an absence of some months. He was warmly welcomed, and at

the same time reproached for his prolonged absence. He explained himself. "I like to come here," he said, "but I can't stand Tom Potter. He talks too much." The identical Tom Potter, the well-known honorary secretary of the Cobden Club, was sitting in his favourite corner at the moment, and it need not be said that after Fawcett's remark the conversation of the little party was somewhat constrained.

But Tom Potter did not suffer so much as I did in that little room in Pall Mall Place. One night in 1877 or 1878 I got there late, after dining with Sir George Grove at his house at Sydenham. I was hot and thirsty, and William Black, whom I found there, immediately suggested to me the propriety of a whisky and soda. I accepted the suggestion. As the foaming glass was handed to me, it occurred to me that the Century Club must have been recently painted; but I was too thirsty to stop to make any remark on the subject, and hastily drank off the cool beverage with which I had been supplied. Directly I had done so, I knew that I had been poisoned. Whatever I had swallowed, it certainly was not whisky. I suppose I turned ghastly pale, for I felt a terrible nausea suddenly overcoming me. Black and my other friends in a state of consternation examined the bottle from which I had been served, and discovered that although it bore the label of a well-known brand of whisky, it contained turpentine. I confess I was relieved when I heard this, as I feared it might have been oxalic acid. But turpentine is bad enough as a beverage, and I do not think I ever spent a more uncomfortable four-and-twenty hours than that which followed this

misadventure. There was no doctor present, but Black undertook to supply his place. "There is only one thing for you to do, my dear Reid. You must get drunk directly." I declared, with reason, that I had drunk too much already, and crept away to my bed, which happily was close at hand. For at least two days after that incident I smelt like a newly-painted lamp-post, but I have always felt grateful to the careless dog of a servant for not having served me up oxalic acid or vitriol in place of the turpentine. After that affair I do not think I ever went back to the Century Club. It was bad enough to be bored by the irrepressible Club Jorkinses, but to be poisoned also was more than flesh and blood could stand.

The Reform, as I soon discovered, differed in many respects from any of the clubs to which I had previously belonged. In those days, it was really the headquarters of a great political party, and amongst its members were to be counted many of the leading statesmen of the day. It contained, too, not a few men of letters, and many prominent men of affairs. A new member coming into the club saw these distinguished persons at lunch, or dinner, or taking their ease in smoking or reading rooms; but he had little chance of becoming acquainted with them unless he had some friend by whom he could be introduced. Fortunately for me, I already knew many of the politicians in the Reform, whilst Black was eager to introduce me to his own friends in the club. On the very first day on which I dined there as a member I was formally admitted to the little coterie the members of which lunched at the same hour every day at a particular table in the large coffee room. They

were known as the "press-gang," and were the objects, I have always imagined, of the mingled hatred and envy of their fellow-members. They were hated because of their exclusiveness, and envied owing to the fact that there was more laughter at that one table than at all the others put together.

It was James Payn who was the chief cause of the laughter. He had himself the loudest laugh of any man I ever met, and he laughed incessantly. Again and again, when his ringing peal sounded through the room and we saw the scandalised faces of our fellow-members, some one amongst us would remind him of the line touching "the loud laugh that speaks the vacant mind," but he only laughed the more loudly, and compelled us also to join in his infectious merriment. Looking back upon the years which I was destined to spend in constant association with that most delightful and lovable of men, I sadly realise the fact that since his death I have never laughed as I did in those happy days. The other members of the luncheon-table party at that time were William Black, George Augustus Sala, Sir John Robinson of the *Daily News*, E. D. J. Wilson of the *Times*, and J. C. Parkinson. There were others who came and went, but those I have named were the regular frequenters of the table. The real bond of union between us was Payn; but, as was only natural, the ties of friendship which united all became very close. To-day (1904) Parkinson and myself alone remain of the merry party of twenty years ago. Payn, Black, Robinson, and Sala are dead, and Wilson has sought the more august society of the Athenæum. The luncheon table is still maintained, and we have

found one or two recruits to fill the empty chairs; but I think it is with pity, rather than with envy, that we survivors of the original party are now regarded by our fellow-members.

However this may be, I shall always regard it as one of the great privileges of my life that for more than twenty years I was a member of this little society of friends, most of whom had kindred tastes, and who, though they might differ widely in ability, were at least alike in the keenness of their enjoyment of the humorous side of life. Many a time since Payn's death I have been asked to repeat some of his "good things," in order that others might understand the fascination that he had for his friends. I might as well be asked to repeat the song of the skylark. It was not in the mere form of words he used that Payn's power of touching and delighting his companions was to be found. He hated puns and verbal trickery of every kind, but he saw more quickly than any other man I have ever known the humorous side of any question or any incident, and he had a knack of making that humorous side perceptible to others which to my mind was absolutely unique. Day after day through the long years I have sat with him at that noonday meal, breathing an atmosphere of wit that was almost intoxicating. It was a wit that was never cruel, never coarse, never anything but kindly and humane. Even his cynicism was genial and good-natured, like that of Lord Houghton himself.

I have spoken already of William Black. He and I had become bound to each other by ties of warm affection. I had the greatest admiration for his genius, and a profound love

for his pure and chivalrous character; but, like myself, he was a listener at the table at which Payn sat. He could say good things occasionally, but, as a rule, his conversation did not approach the excellence of his writing. Payn, on the other hand, was infinitely better in talk than in writing. He has written some essays which will hold their own side by side with some of Elia's, but no essay that he ever wrote had the delightful fascination that, to the very last, attached to his conversation. Sala talked almost as much as Payn, but in a very different fashion. He was an encyclopædia of out-of-the-way knowledge, and had a story or an illustration for every topic that cropped up at the luncheon table. Sometimes his omniscience was almost overpowering; but I have heard innumerable good stories admirably told by him. Of Parkinson I must not speak, for he is happily still left to the luncheon table and to me. Robinson, from experiences which were as varied as they were abundant, was able to contribute much to our enjoyment at those bright gatherings of old, whilst he shared to the full in the affectionate admiration with which we all regarded Payn.

The summer of 1878 witnessed the meeting of the Congress at Berlin which followed the Russo-Turkish War. Despite all the scares through which we had passed during the winter and spring, we had escaped the war between ourselves and Russia with which we had been so often threatened, and the purpose of the Congress was to render such a war impossible in the immediate future. It was this summer of 1878 that also witnessed Disraeli's complete triumph over his enemies and his rivals.

He had secured his own way in the Cabinet, though in doing so he had to lose the services of Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon, and to convert Lord Salisbury to views which, up to that time, he had professed to abhor. He had brought the Indian troops to Malta, and had thereby given a significant hint to Europe as to the extent of our resources. He had got a vote of five millions from the House of Commons, and had spent a great part of it in the purchase of ships of war, some of which turned out to be wholly unfitted for the requirements of the English Naval Service. His picturesque and audacious policy had won the favour of the multitude, and, despite the criticisms of Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister was the undisputed master of the nation.

Looking back, I do not think I am unfair when I say that Disraeli's triumph seemed to be largely due to his power of playing to the gallery. He gave the crowd in the streets the scenic effects which they loved. He flattered their vanity, and he played upon their weaknesses, and thus he was able in a great measure to realise the florid dreams of his youth, and to strengthen English influence in that Eastern world which had always exercised so great a fascination over him. When he went to Berlin with Lord Salisbury as his companion, there was a great crowd at Charing Cross Station to see him depart. I was one of the spectators, and was struck by the deference which was paid to him by the many distinguished persons who had come to speed him on his journey. Lord Salisbury passed unnoticed by his side. At Berlin the same thing happened. In the great Congress in which all the European Powers were represented, Disraeli's

figure outshone all others. Even Bismarck seemed to take a secondary place to that of the Jew adventurer, who had made so splendid a fight for his own hand, and had achieved so magnificent a success. The story of his life, the romance of his career, and his personal peculiarities seemed to have produced a deep impression upon people of all classes and of all nationalities, and it is no exaggeration to say that during his residence in Berlin the eyes of the whole world were fixed upon him.

When Disraeli came back from Berlin, having by an astute and not very creditable transaction secured the Island of Cyprus for the British Crown, besides compelling Russia to forego some of the fruits of her victory over Turkey, he met with a reception of extraordinary enthusiasm. A conqueror returning from the wars could hardly, indeed, have been acclaimed more loudly than was Lord Beaconsfield as he drove from Charing Cross Railway Station to Downing Street. If he had seen fit to dissolve Parliament then he would have swept the country, and would have been confirmed in the possession of power. But he had his own standard of honour, and it did not permit him to attempt to snatch a victory of this kind. His political opponents are bound to acknowledge their indebtedness to him in this matter.

Shortly after the close of the Berlin Congress I took a long holiday from my duties at Leeds, and made a most interesting tour through Europe in the company of a friend, Mr. Greig, the manager of the Leeds Steam Plough Works. Greig was engaged on a business tour, his purpose being to see the different estates on which the system

of steam culture—of which his partner, Mr. Fowler, was the author—was employed. Our trip took us in the first place to Germany, where we visited Magdeburg, Halberstadt, Berlin, and Saxon Switzerland. Thence we went into Bohemia, staying at Prague some days, and visiting some remote parts of that picturesque but most unromantic country—for there is, alas! no kinship between the Bohemia of reality and that of romance. After Bohemia came Vienna, Budapest, and the Danube. Then at Orsova we turned north, and went by way of Bucharest, Román, and Lemberg into Galicia, finally making our way back again to Vienna, and thence to Paris and home. In those days much of the ground I have mentioned was practically unknown to English tourists. The lower Danube, for example, and the great plains of Roumania, though they were within four days' rail of London, were not so well known to English people as the Nile, the Ganges, or the Mississippi. It seems strange, indeed, now to recall the fact that both in Hungary and in Roumania we visited places where Englishmen were regarded as rare and curious animals, people to be run after and stared at as they passed along the village street. All this, I presume, is changed now through the influence of the wonder-working Cook. Yet one cannot believe that even now there are not some nooks and corners of the Bukovina where my fellow countrymen have hardly penetrated, and where they are still regarded with eyes of curiosity, if not of fear.

At all events, in my own case, in this year 1878, I no sooner diverged from the beaten track than I had experience of the fact that there was

still an unexplored world within the confines of Europe. The long journey down the Danube in a steamboat, now superseded by the railway, formed in itself an expedition of no common interest. It happened that my friend and I had to leave the steamer at Mohacs, famous in history, and in the pages of Thackeray, in order to visit the vast estates of the Archduke Albrecht, at that time the richest member of the Imperial family. It was then that I had the first experience of a genuine Hungarian town, with its streets knee-deep in mud, and swarming with huge dogs of ferocious temper. On quitting the steamboat for the inn, I seemed at one step to have passed from civilisation into savagery. Anything more atrociously filthy and repulsive than this establishment I never saw, and yet it was the best inn of a town of thirty thousand inhabitants.

When we reached our destination—a castle of the Archduke's—the next day, we found ourselves once more surrounded with the comforts and decencies of civilised life, but there were many evidences of the fact that we were here far from the world. The game of croquet, for example, had been for some ten years before this time practically extinct in England. At the Archduke's castle they seemed just to have heard of it, and were eagerly learning it when we arrived. At one of the outlying farms on the splendid estate, the manager, like all his colleagues, was of noble birth. When he found that we were Englishmen he suddenly disappeared from the room. In a few minutes he returned with a smiling and handsome young lady on his arm. "My wife speaks English," he declared, in accents of pride. It turned out that the lady,

who had been educated at Budapest, had never spoken to any Englishman before. We seemed to be almost the first who had ever penetrated into that unknown land. When the husband found that his wife was able to converse with us he literally danced for joy, and invited all the rest of the company to witness the wonderful spectacle. The hospitality and friendliness of the Hungarians were delightful. However unpopular Englishmen might be elsewhere in Europe, at that time they were certainly loved in Hungary, and the mere fact of his nationality was sufficient to secure for the English traveller an unstinted hospitality.

Bucharest, when we reached it, was still in the occupation of the Russian army. The war with Turkey had ended many months before, but the Russian troops had not yet been withdrawn from the Danube, while thousands of Turkish prisoners of war were still under detention in Roumania. It was interesting to observe the unveiled hostility of the Russian and Roumanian officers when they met in the streets and cafés. The only salutation that passed between them was a scowl. I heard many stories as to the jealousies and dissensions which had broken out during the war between the Russians and their allies. The siege of Plevna, in particular, had left bitter memories behind it. The Roumanians openly accused the Russian officers of having selfishly sacrificed the soldiers of the little principality in order to save the lives of Russians. Great fear was felt in Bucharest that the Russians meant to stay there, and their swaggering and domineering attitude certainly seemed to justify the dread felt by those who were entertaining them so unwillingly.

The only happy and smiling people I encountered during my stay in Bucharest were the Turkish prisoners of war and the gipsies. The prisoners were cheerful and good-natured fellows. Most of them were eager to eke out their scanty allowance for food by doing work of any kind, and I was told that when Prince Charles returned in triumph at the head of his army after the close of the war, these Turkish prisoners had begged for and obtained the work of erecting a triumphal arch in his honour. As for the gipsies, they abounded in Bucharest now that winter had begun to close in upon the country, and the stirring strains of their quaint melodies were to be heard in every café and at almost every street corner.

Brofft's Hotel was at that time the chief place of entertainment in Bucharest. The principal bedrooms were occupied by ladies who purported to be the wives of the leading Russian officers, but about whom there was a strong smack of the boulevards. In the restaurant the officers themselves dined and drank freely at numberless small tables, Roumanians and Russians taking care to keep apart from each other. You could dine very well at Brofft's, but you had to pay for your dinner at a rate which cast into the shade the highest charges of Paris or Vienna. It was here that I had experience of an amusing piece of effrontery on the part of the proprietor. On our first evening in Bucharest my two friends and I—for Mr. Greig had been joined by another member of his firm—dined very well, but we were somewhat startled when we had to pay the bill, which amounted to more than a pound a head. The next evening, determined to be economical, we ordered a very

moderate repast. Whilst we were eating it, Brofft himself appeared at our table. "I am sorry you are having so poor a dinner to-night, gentlemen," he said. "I do hope you will let me add something to it, for, you know, the price will be the same, whatever you have." And, sure enough, we again had to pay more than a pound apiece for this very unsatisfactory dinner. After that experience, we always took care to order the rarest and most costly viands on the *carte du jour*.

I made one interesting acquaintance at Bucharest. This was Mr. White, the English Consul. Few at that time anticipated that he was destined to rise to a height never before attained by a member of the Consular Service, and to end his career as Sir William White, her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople. Yet all who are acquainted with the facts are aware that Sir William was better qualified than almost any other man for this high position, and that his death was nothing less than a national misfortune. At Bucharest in 1878 he was living in the simplest fashion in the rambling Consulate. When I first went to call upon him he himself opened the door in response to my knock. We had a long conversation upon Eastern politics, in the course of which he explained his own perfect knowledge of affairs in the Balkan Peninsula by telling me that he knew all the languages spoken in that part of the world, and was consequently able to study the local newspapers for himself. White was a big, powerful man, with an air of unpolished frankness and good-nature that seemed to belie his character as a diplomatist. His was one of the most interesting careers in the public service of this country. In diplomacy he

climbed from the very bottom of the tree to the very top, and he did so without having any special personal influence. The Russians both hated him and feared him, and there was nothing he enjoyed so much as a game of diplomatic bowls with Prince Gortschakoff or his successor. Some years before he went to Constantinople Lord Salisbury offered to make him our Minister at Pekin, and rumour has it that he recommended the new position to White on the ground that it was at Pekin that the battle between England and Russia would have to be fought out. But White's great ambition was to be her Majesty's Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, and he declined the post at Pekin, where he might have been of even greater service to us than he was at Constantinople.

On my return to England I wrote some account of my trip in the *Fortnightly Review*, then under the editorship of Mr. John Morley. My journey had undoubtedly opened my eyes to the economic possibilities of Eastern Europe, and it had also proved to me that, at that time, at all events, England was well able to hold her own in the race for commercial supremacy even against Germany. Again and again, in visiting German workshops, I found that the practical direction of the establishment was in the hands of some Englishman or Scotsman, and the intensely practical character of the English workman, his readiness of resource, and his reliance upon himself in difficulties, were themes upon which my German friends were never tired of dilating. I am afraid that the case is somewhat different now, and that we are not so well able to compete, even on their own ground, with the artisans and business men of Germany as we were in 1878.

CHAPTER XII.

A CHAPTER OF MISFORTUNES.

Death of my Sister's Husband and of my Brother James—An Accident on Marston Moor—Sir George Wombwell's Story of the Charge of the Light Brigade—His Adventure on the Ouse—Editing a Daily Newspaper from a Sick Bed—Reflections on Death—Death of my Mother—Serious Illness of my Only Daughter.

THERE is a great deal of truth in the lines which declare that sorrows and troubles do not come alone—"they come not single spies, but in battalions." I have had experience of the fact more than once in my own life; but never was it presented to me in such overwhelming force as in the year 1880. On January 1st in that year I attended the funeral of my only sister's husband at Kilmarnock. He, the Rev. William Bathgate, D.D., was a Scottish minister, a man of culture and refinement, and the author of some theological works which had attained considerable popularity. His death is associated in my mind with a great public calamity, the fall of the Tay Bridge, when a train with all its passengers was destroyed. The wind that toppled over the Tay Bridge proved fatal to my brother-in-law. It was on a Sunday night—the last Sunday of 1879—and he had gone to visit one of the Sunday schools attached to his church. The furious gale, which about the same time destroyed the Tay Bridge, burst in its full fury upon him soon after

he had left his house, and after battling against it for some time he found himself so much exhausted that he was unable to move. It was only with the assistance of a kindly passer-by that he was enabled to return home. Half an hour later he died in my sister's presence, without a sound or a movement. I began the year, consequently, in melancholy circumstances, in attendance at his funeral.

A few weeks later, at the beginning of February, a loss which I felt still more keenly fell upon me. My elder brother, James, who had been my constant companion from boyhood, and who had spent the closing years of his life in intimate association with me at Leeds, died after a lingering illness. The loss of one who had been for so many years my closest companion and my most confidential friend, with whom I consulted over almost every step of my life, was irreparable, and to this hour I continue to feel the lack of his sympathy and advice in moments of personal perplexity. Always more or less of an invalid, he lived much in the life of his brothers, and his cheery fortitude, kindly humour, and unfailing sympathy made his loss keenly felt in our family circle. He died, by a strange coincidence, on the tenth anniversary of the death of my first wife.

Three months later, I myself met with an accident which not only entailed great suffering upon me, but almost cost me my life. It was in the month of May, when, after the severe exertions imposed upon me by the General Election—of which I shall speak fully later on—I had left Leeds for a few days' rest and change.

Sir George Wombwell, of Balaclava fame, had invited a small party—of whom I was one—to join him on a driving tour among the abbeys and ruins of the East Riding. The other members of the party were William Black, Bret Harte, who had not long before taken up his residence in England, and C. O. Shepard, the American Consul at Bradford. Our rendezvous was at York, on a certain Saturday, and we had agreed to spend that afternoon in visiting the battlefield of Marston Moor. We drove out to the field in the highest spirits. I, in particular, was elated at the thought of my escape from the drudgery of my office, as well as by the prospect of the agreeable companionship of Black and Harte, not to speak of Shepard, who was an admirable teller of American stories, of which he possessed an inexhaustible fund.

We were crossing the battlefield on foot when we found our way stopped by a hedge. It was a long way round to the gate of the field, and the hedge did not seem very formidable. At all events, Black and Shepard cleared it at a bound, and laughingly challenged Harte and me to follow their example. But we were prudent men, and openly congratulated ourselves upon that fact when we discovered a gap, through which it seemed possible to pass quite easily. Harte passed through without difficulty, and I followed his example. I had to jump about eighteen inches from the bank of the hedge into the field. Nothing seemed simpler. Yet when I landed on my feet one of them was caught in some mysterious way in a hole in the ground, and whilst it was held as in a vice, my body was wrenched round on the axis of my knee. To this day I do not understand how it happened.

All I knew at the moment was that something had given way in the knee-joint, and that when I attempted to put my foot to the ground, after extricating it from the hole in which it had been caught, "the pains of hell gat hold upon me." I suppose I must, up to that time, have been fairly free from physical torments of any kind. I had certainly no conception, before that moment, that it was possible for a human being to suffer such torture as I had then to endure.

I turned away my face from my companions so that they might not see that I was suffering, and they went on unconscious of anything having happened. I set off to follow them, supporting myself as best I could with an umbrella which I chanced to be carrying. When they saw that I limped they inquired the cause, but I reassured them by saying that it was nothing more than a slight sprain. I was determined that I would not spoil sport, or cast a shadow over the good spirits of our party. But, Heavens, how that knee tortured me! I suppose I was a fool. Indeed, the doctor told me so the next morning, with some heat and quite unnecessary emphasis. But I went on at the moment as if nothing had happened, crawling with the aid of my umbrella across field after field, and even climbing up some steps in order to see the room where Cromwell slept the night before—or was it the night after? —the battle. Then I walked on to the place where our carriage was waiting for us. It was standing at a little country public-house. "I am going in here to get a drink," said I to Black. "What!" cried he. "Drink anything here? Why, they'll poison you!" "So much the better,"

I retorted, and then my friends began to realise that I was hurt. They consulted together as to the stimulant that was most likely to be innocuous, and finally decided upon gin. I had never drunk gin in my life before. I now tossed off three glasses in quick succession. It was very nasty, and it did not take away the pain, but it made me feel rather less like dying than I had done before.

Somehow or other I got back to York, and, with the aid of the hotel porter, undressed and got to bed. By this time my knee was enormously swollen, but I was so ignorant of the actual position of affairs that I honestly thought that all that was necessary to put me right again was a rest of a few hours. Unfortunately, I was not allowed even that homœopathic remedy. We were to dine with Sir George Wombwell at the Yorkshire Club that evening. I proposed to stay in bed at the hotel, but to this Black demurred. He hated to meet strangers, and he declared that if I did not go with him to the club he would not go at all. So once more the porter was requisitioned, and with his help I managed to get into evening clothes. Arrived at the club, the quick, soldierly eye of Sir George Wombwell instantly detected my condition, and diagnosed it more accurately than either I or my companions had done. I remained to dinner, but a leg-rest was provided for me, and everything done to make me feel comfortable, whilst Sir George sent a messenger to Mr. Husband, an eminent surgeon of York, asking him to see me at the hotel as early as possible next morning.

The evening passed like a nightmare, but I still have a vivid recollection of the account which

Sir George Wombwell gave me of his famous ride with the Light Brigade at Balaclava. His horse was shot under him whilst they were charging for the guns, and, being left behind whilst the brigade thundered onward, he was made prisoner by the Russian cavalry, which closed in behind our English horse. His captivity lasted, however, for but a few minutes. The cry was raised that the English were returning from their mad but heroic enterprise, and instantly the Russians scattered and fled. As Lord Cardigan, who was riding in front of the remnant of the shattered brigade, passed Wombwell, he shouted, "Catch a horse, you d——d young fool, and come with us!"—advice which Wombwell promptly took. He found the charger of a Russian officer, and, mounting it, came back in safety with the few survivors of the awful day.

That was not, however Wombwell declared, the occasion on which his life had been in greatest peril. Years afterwards, he and Sir Charles Slingsby and a number of the members of the York and Anisty Hunt were crossing the Ouse in a ferry-boat, when some of the horses were seized with panic, and the boat was upset. Sir Charles Slingsby and a number of others—twelve, I believe, in all—were drowned, Wombwell being one of the few who escaped. This he regarded as a much more dangerous adventure than the charge of the Light Brigade. Someone at the dinner-table told a story about this tragedy which Wombwell, I thought, hardly liked. The ferry-boat was upset in the river adjoining Sir Charles Slingsby's estate. One of his tenants who had heard of the disaster, and had been told that only one of the baronets had escaped, was hurrying to the scene of the catas-

trophe, when he met Sir George Wombwell riding home. As soon as the man saw Sir George he flung up his hands, and in accents of dismay cried, "Eh! but they've drowned t'wrang baronet!"

On the morning after this dinner, Mr. Husband visited me and inspected my knee. I told him that I meant to stay in bed during the day, but hoped he would allow me to keep an engagement I had made to dine at the Cavalry Barracks in the evening. Eyeing me with great severity, the good surgeon said: "You are a man of intelligence, or at least you ought to be, considering the position you hold. You must surely know that you have met with an injury that will keep you in bed for weeks, at least." And he hinted, not obscurely, that still worse things than prolonged confinement to bed would certainly befall me if I did not take the greatest care of my injured leg. So there ended all my hopes of a pleasant holiday. The next day I was taken back to Leeds in a state of absolute helplessness, and, being got to bed in my own house, had to remain there for nine mortal weeks.

Some of the experiences of that time were curious. Phlebitis had set in, and for a time I was in serious danger from the formation of a clot of blood in one of the arteries. As is pretty generally known, whilst this state of things exists death may occur at any moment from the stoppage of the heart through the clot getting free and passing into the central organ. It was curious to lie in this condition for several days, never knowing at night whether I should see the sun rise again. But I was very much struck by the fact that I became easily reconciled to my state, and did not

feel the slightest apprehension with regard to the course of the disease. I was almost free from pain, and was able to carry on my work as regularly as if I had been in attendance at the *Mercury* office. Every evening I dictated my leading article to a shorthand writer. A telephone—at that time a great novelty—was put up by the side of my bed and connected with my room at the *Mercury* office, and by this means I was kept in constant communication with the members of my staff.

Thus my time passed pleasantly enough. When I was not dictating I was reading, and during my confinement I re-read the whole of the Waverley novels. It was when I was once more enjoying the romantic adventures of "Ivanhoe" that I was seized, one afternoon, with the premonitory symptoms which my doctors had told me would indicate the approach of death. At my urgent request they had enlightened me upon this point, and I had learned that death from the accidental stoppage of the heart would be without pain, and would simply be preceded by a feeling of faintness. It was a feeling of this kind which suddenly stole over me as I was reading "Ivanhoe." I felt it deepening, and laid aside my book under the firm conviction that I would never again read printed page. Asking for some stimulant, I was given some brandy and water, but it seemed to have no effect in checking the ever-increasing faintness. So I closed my eyes in the drowsy belief that I should never open them again in this world. I felt no pain, no agitation, no fear. Half an hour later I awoke from a placid sleep, and, to my great surprise, found that I was decidedly better than I had been for some time. This seemed, indeed,

to have been the crisis of my illness, and from that point I slowly recovered. My doctors conjectured that a minute clot of blood had really passed through my heart, producing the faintness from which I had suffered, but not causing death.

I have dwelt at unconscionable length upon this incident of my accidental injury and subsequent illness, but I have done so for the very reason that, sooner or later, experiences of this kind come to most of us, and it may be of some use to state exactly, not only the wonderful rapidity with which a man by the simplest misadventure may imperil his life, but the sensations with which he greets the apparent approach of death. All who have suffered from severe illness must know how readily the invalid accustoms himself to seclusion from the world, and how quickly the panorama of passing life seems to fade into insignificance. The outside world becomes, at such a time, a mere passing show which has but a secondary interest for the man who can take no part in it. As for the approach of death, I believe, from my own experience, that there is nothing to which a sick man more easily reconciles himself. Certainly, since those days in 1880 I have lost any fear I may have had before of that inevitable end which awaits us all. It is the recovery from a severe illness of accidental injury that is the really trying thing. For many weeks after I left my bed I was a cripple, compelled to use crutches in moving about, and suffering from extreme weakness. I went to Bridlington, a watering-place on the Yorkshire coast, to recruit, and, hiring a small trawling boat, I spent every day upon the sea, beating up

and down the fine bay trawling for fish. In this way I got plenty of fresh air without bodily fatigue, whilst I had the enjoyment of one of my favourite pursuits.

Shortly after my return from Bridlington, and whilst I was still crippled, another great misfortune befell me. This was the death, on the 5th of August, of my mother, a woman of distinct culture and intellectual power, to whom her children had been indebted for many things in addition to the motherly love which she lavished upon them all so freely. It was, I think, the shock of her death, and the exertion of the railway journey to my brother Stuart's house at Wilmslow, Cheshire, which I took in order that I might see her before she died, that brought about a relapse in my condition. In the hope that I should benefit by it, my doctors ordered me a long sea voyage. It was the first I had ever undertaken. I sailed from Liverpool on the *Sidon*, one of the Cunard Company's steamers, for a round trip through the Mediterranean to Constantinople and back. The *Sidon* was a slow old boat, and we took ten days to reach Malta, the first place of stoppage. I never enjoyed ten days so much before or since. The novelty of life at sea charmed me, whilst the freedom from all work and anxiety was delightful. Every day I seemed to have acquired a fresh stock of vigour, and by the time we reached Malta I could no longer pretend to be an invalid. It was fortunate for me that my health had undergone this wonderful improvement, for we had no sooner cast anchor in the busy harbour of Valetta than a telegram was put into my hands, announcing that my only daughter Nellie

had been struck down by typhoid on the very day on which I sailed from England.

There was no opportunity at the moment of getting back from Malta to England direct, and I had consequently to continue my voyage to Syra, Smyrna, and Constantinople, getting telegrams, of course, at each place as to the condition of the invalid. At Constantinople I had an urgent summons from my daughter's medical attendants, and started at an hour's notice for home by the overland route, such as it then was. Leaving Constantinople on a Tuesday at two o'clock by the Austrian Lloyd steamer for Varna, I reached my own house in Yorkshire shortly after midnight on the following Sunday. I believe I established on that occasion a record in travelling from the Bosphorus to Leeds. I have described this overland journey in "Gladys Fane." It was an experience worth remembering, especially in these days of *trains de luxe*, when the traveller passes from Calais to Constantinople without a change of carriage. From Constantinople to Varna I had an exceedingly rough passage in the Austrian boat, and at Varna the weather was so bad that it was with difficulty that I persuaded the captain to allow me to land in time to catch the through train. The whole of the following day we were passing through the gloomy uplands of Bulgaria. Crossing the Danube at Rustchuk in the evening, we reached Bucharest by nine o'clock at night. Here was the only opportunity I had during my journey of obtaining a night's rest, and I eagerly availed myself of it. Remembering Brofft's extortions on the occasion of my previous visit to Bucharest, I went to a new hotel which had

just been opened, one of the advertised attractions of which was its moderate charges.

The next morning, when I was preparing for my early start by train, the proprietor of the hotel came to have a chat with me, and I explained to him the reason why I had chosen his house in preference to Brofft's. "Quite right, sir!" he exclaimed with great heartiness. "Everybody says the same thing. Take my word for it, sir, Brofft is a thief." At that moment my bill was handed to me. It was more extortionate than anything I had known at Brofft's. "That is as it may be," I said, turning to the landlord, "but I think you will agree with me that if Brofft is a thief, he is not the only one in Bucharest." Things, I hope, have changed since then. If they have not done so I am sorry for the tourist who unwittingly includes Bucharest in the round of the holiday vacation. From Bucharest to London, and thence to Leeds, I came practically without a break, and on reaching my own home once more, in the dead of the night, I had the joy of knowing that the crisis of my daughter's illness was passed, and that she was spared to me. Here ends the chronicle of my misfortunes during the year 1880. It is but a trivial tale, and one that, I fear, will have small interest for the reader, but I have ventured to tell it as an illustration of the adage that troubles never come singly. In the quarter of a century that has elapsed since then I have not had to encounter such a series of misfortunes as came upon me in the first nine months of that ill-omened year.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1880.

Mr. Gladstone's Position in 1879—His Decision to Contest Midlothian—How he came to be Adopted by the Leeds Liberals—The Conversation Club—A Visit from John Morley—The Dissolution of 1880—Lecture on Mr. Gladstone—His Triumphant Return for Leeds—His Election for Midlothian—Mr. Herbert Gladstone Adopted as his Successor at Leeds—Mr. Gladstone's Visit to Leeds in 1881—A Fiasco Narrowly Avoided—A Wonderful Mass Meeting—Mr. Gladstone's Collapse and Recovery—My Introduction to Him—An Excursion to Tunis—"The Land of the Bey"—Mr. A. M. Broadley's Prophecies—Howard Payne's Grave—A Series of Coincidences.

THE misfortunes described in the last chapter befell me in 1880; I must now retrace my steps and go back to the year 1879. That year was largely spent in preparations for the General Election. Party spirit ran very high. Lord Beaconsfield retained his great popularity in London and among the classes, and the Press and the clubs in consequence believed that the General Election, when it came, would provide him with another victory. Mr. Gladstone was hated more than ever by the London journalists, and by all who had been attracted by the showy foreign policy of Lord Beaconsfield. I am afraid that he was not at this time over popular in the inner circle of his own party. He had resigned the leadership in 1875, and had ostensibly gone into retirement. He had emerged from that retirement in 1876, in order to be the voice of the nation in its outburst of indignation against the Sultan.

From that time forward he had occupied a curious position. He was neither leader nor follower, but a great force, acting independently of other persons, and disconcerting them visibly by the unexpectedness of his movements.

I had access, years afterwards, to the records of the meetings of the leading members of the Liberal party during the period between 1874 and 1880. It was easy to gather from these secret and confidential memoirs that Mr. Gladstone was found to be an uneasy bedfellow by his old colleagues. When he was moved by any strong impulse he was very apt to forget that Lord Hartington was the nominal leader of the Opposition, and to take some line of action without waiting to consult his ostensible chief. He did, I believe, consult Lord Granville with frequency, if not with regularity. Lord Granville was, in his opinion, the leader of the whole party, whilst the only post held by Lord Hartington was that of leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. The result of his frequent interventions in public affairs was undoubtedly to throw the Opposition into some confusion. The *Times*, and the other chief organs of the London Press, constantly poured ridicule upon his speeches, and did their best to accentuate the differences between himself and his former colleagues. It followed—not unnaturally, perhaps—that there were those among the leaders of the Liberal party who desired to prevent Mr. Gladstone's return to power. But whilst the great chief was thus assailed and intrigued against in London, his position in the country was every day becoming stronger.

It was known that he meant to retire from

the representation of Greenwich when the Parliament elected in 1874 came to an end. A score of different towns contended for the honour of securing him as the Liberal representative. Leeds, amongst other great constituencies, sent a deputation to Harley Street, where Mr. Gladstone was living. To all these offers he turned a deaf ear, and to the amazement of everybody it was announced that he had decided to contest Midlothian, at that time represented by Lord Dalkeith, whose father, the Duke of Buccleuch, was the recognised leader of Conservatism in Scotland. Many years afterwards I learned from Mr. Gladstone himself that before accepting the candidature for Midlothian he consulted Lord Granville and Lord Hartington, pointing out to them that if he were to enter into a colossal struggle like that involved in the fight for the great Tory stronghold of Midlothian, instead of accepting one of the safe seats offered to him elsewhere, his position in the party would of necessity be altered. In short, he could only fight Midlothian as a leader. Lord Granville and Lord Hartington, undeterred by this consideration, still pressed him to stand for Midlothian. From the moment he consented to do so Mr. Gladstone undoubtedly regarded himself as the leader in the great campaign upon which the country was about to embark.

In Leeds great efforts were made by the Liberals in preparation for the conflict. My own position in the party was now very different from what it had been in 1874. I had been taken into the innermost circle of the caucus, and now exercised a considerable amount of direct influence over its proceedings. Having formed an intimate friend-

ship with the honorary secretary of the Liberal Association, Mr. Mathers, I was consulted upon every step that was taken. It was at my suggestion that Mr.—now Sir James—Kitson was invited to become our president, and I believe I am correct in saying that it was by my arguments that he was induced to accept the office. From the moment when he did so, the organisation of the party in Leeds—where in 1874 we had met with so cruel a disaster—began to advance by leaps and bounds. Kitson was a man of great sagacity and shrewdness, and of much strength of character. Mathers was simply the best organiser and wire-puller I ever met in the course of my life. He was a master of detail, one of those rare men who can retain within their grasp the full knowledge of every fact in the most complicated of problems. He was also, like myself, an enthusiastic Gladstonian. Unkind people in Leeds said in those days that the Liberal party consisted of three persons, Kitson, Mathers, and Reid. This may not have been absolutely correct, but it was certainly not very far from the truth.

On every side we witnessed, during this year 1879, the revival of Liberal feeling, and the rapid growth of a strong hostility to Lord Beaconsfield's adventures in the domain of foreign affairs. The current had turned with a vengeance, and the flowing tide was indeed with us. We three organisers of Leeds Liberalism were determined that at the coming General Election we would win a victory that should fully redeem the character of our town and give it a leading place in the political world. We were, however, somewhat hampered for want of a good

candidate to stand along with Mr. Barran, the sitting member. I had found a thoroughly suitable man who would have been a credit to the constituency, but there were other candidates in the field, and it seemed as though one of these would be chosen by the Liberal Four Hundred. For the adoption of a candidate was a matter which rested solely with the Four Hundred, and they clung to this prerogative of theirs with great tenacity.

On the eve of the meeting at which they were to make their final selection of a colleague for Mr. Barran, I learned that my fears were well founded, and that the choice was likely to fall upon a gentleman whom I did not regard as suitable. In order to prevent this, I proposed in the *Leeds Mercury* of the next morning that, in spite of Mr. Gladstone's acceptance of the candidature for Midlothian, we should make him our candidate at Leeds also. It was true that he had already refused the invitation of the Leeds Liberals, but I pointed out that the fight for Midlothian would notoriously be a severe one, and that it was quite possible that Mr. Gladstone might be defeated. In such a case, if the Liberal Association adopted my suggestion, Leeds would secure the high honour of being represented by Mr. Gladstone, whilst, in any event, our adoption of him as a candidate would enable him to conduct the contest in Midlothian without feeling any anxiety as to a possible interruption in his Parliamentary career. To my great delight, the Liberal Association not only adopted my suggestion, but did so with enthusiasm. I had consulted nobody before making it, but I had the satisfaction of finding that everybody

approved of it—everybody, that is to say, except the gentleman who had won over to his own candidature a considerable proportion of the Four Hundred.

When the Association met that evening the whole of the candidates whose claims had been so eagerly discussed beforehand were swept ruthlessly aside, and nothing was talked of but the proposal of the *Leeds Mercury*. After some discussion—in the course of which one gentleman shrewdly pointed out that the anonymous letter suggesting the candidature of Mr. Gladstone was probably written by the editor of the *Mercury* himself—the Association resolved by an overwhelming majority that Mr. Gladstone should be one of the two Liberal candidates for Leeds at the next election. And yet, at the very time when this proof of his extraordinary hold upon the affections of a great community was made public, the London newspapers were speaking of Mr. Gladstone as a politician who no longer possessed either reputation or influence. We, who had to live at a distance from Fleet Street, were at least able to form a sounder judgment upon this point.

I may interpolate here an account of one of the institutions of Leeds that helped to reconcile me to my sojourn in that city. I do so because it has always seemed to me to be a model institution of the kind. This was the Conversation Club. It consisted of twelve members who were supposed to be more or less representative of the intellectual life of the town. The meetings were held monthly, each member entertaining his fellow-members once a year in his own house. After dinner the host acted as president, and the members present talked

upon some selected subject. By an ingenious arrangement it was impossible that anyone should know beforehand what the subject of conversation on any particular evening would be. In this way the preparation of set arguments was prevented, and the club had nothing about it of the debating society. Speeches, of course, were strictly prohibited. We limited ourselves to real conversation, and many a delightful talk we had after dinner in those Leeds drawing-rooms in which we met. Any facility I may have gained in conversation I feel that I owe to the club, as I owe to it also many happy and instructive hours. Considering our limited numbers, and the fact that we met in a provincial town, we counted in our membership an usually large number of men who have made some mark in the world. Amongst the members were William Edward Forster, Sir Edward Baines, the Bishops of Ely (Woodford), Truro (Gott), Chester (Jayne), and Rochester (Talbot); Clifford Allbutt, Regius Professor of Medicine at Cambridge; Professor—now Sir Arthur—Rücker, who has been secretary of the Royal Society and President of the British Association, and is now Principal of the University of London; Professor Thorpe, the chemist and Government analyst, and Dr. Edison. This is not a bad list for so small a club, and one might easily give many other names, in addition, of men who would have been welcomed anywhere for their knowledge and attainments. In the year 1900 the club celebrated its jubilee, and its members can look back with satisfaction upon the influence which it has had on the social and intellectual life of Leeds. Politics and religion were forbidden themes; but many public movements of great

importance for the development and improvement of Leeds have had their origin in our conversations, whilst the intellectual stimulus which those conversations afforded cannot be forgotten by at least one grateful member of the club.

I may here mention a visit I received from John Morley about this period. He was one of the many men whose acquaintanceship I owed to the good offices of Lord Houghton. It is an acquaintanceship that has lasted over a considerable stretch of years, and that has from time to time been of a close and almost confidential character. The charm of John Morley's manner, and the brightness of his talk, have been felt and acknowledged by all who have been brought into contact with him, and it would be superfluous on my part to say anything about his literary reputation. But I have always felt that neither his fine gifts nor his peculiar temperament were suited for the rough and tumble of political warfare. I have felt this whether I have been, as has often happened, marching behind him in thorough unison with his opinions, or, as has also occurred at times, directly opposed to him and to his policy. He came to see me at Leeds because, having undertaken to deliver an address to the Trades Union Congress, he was wishful to learn something on the spot of the relations of master and men in a great industrial community. I made him acquainted with my friends James Kitson and David Greig. He discussed with them the problems concerning the relations of labour and capital, and in their company visited the great industrial establishments over which they presided. At that time he was not in Parliament, nor had he begun his

editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I remember that, after a fatiguing day, spent in the works of the Kitsons, Morley expressed his conviction that the great captains of industry, like Kitson and Greig, were not only of greater importance to the world than a mere Secretary of State, but were engaged upon much more laborious and responsible tasks. I do not know if he still adheres to that opinion.

I must now turn back to the course of public events, or at least of those with which I had some personal connection. The dissolution of 1880 came very unexpectedly, almost as unexpectedly as that of 1874. One evening, as I was preparing to go down to the office, a messenger arrived in hot haste with a telegram that had come over the *Mercury* private wire stating that the intention to dissolve Parliament had been announced in the House of Commons that evening. Kitson, Mathers, and I had made all our preparations, so the plan of campaign was already settled. On getting the telegram I crossed over to the house of Mathers, who was a neighbour of mine, and told him the news, and together we drove off to Kitson's to take the first steps in the battle. The next morning the people of Leeds awoke to discover every dead wall in the town placarded with an address, signed by the president of the Liberal Association, announcing the dissolution, and appealing to the electors to support the Liberal candidates, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Barran. By ten o'clock in the forenoon our committee rooms were open, and in full working order, and bands of willing workers, whom we had summoned the night before, were already being

despatched to all quarters of the town to begin the indispensable canvass. Our opponents were taken completely by surprise, and we had gained that great advantage in all contests, the first start. As it began, so it continued. All through the great struggle the Conservatives were hopelessly behind us. As the enthusiastic Mathers afterwards remarked, "We were right on the top of them the whole time." It was a stirring and Homeric contest. To a staunch Liberal it was one that gave unalloyed satisfaction, for all through the great fight there was the amplest evidence that the flowing tide was on the side of Liberalism.

In Leeds we had, of course, to face the disadvantage of fighting without our chief candidate. Not by a word nor a sign did Mr. Gladstone, who was deep in his own struggle in Midlothian, show that he was conscious that an election in which he was personally concerned was going on in Yorkshire. Naturally, our opponents made the most of this, and we had constantly to meet the taunt that we were asking the electors to vote for a man who had refused to countenance our proceedings, and who would never, as a matter of fact, sit as the representative of Leeds in the House of Commons. In ordinary times we should undoubtedly have suffered from this taunt, especially since it had the merit of being true. But in 1880 the times were the reverse of ordinary. The overwhelming majority of the people of Great Britain seemed to be possessed by an almost passionate admiration for Mr. Gladstone. Future generations will find it difficult to understand the extent of the fascination that he seemed, at that period in his career, to exercise over the minds and hearts of a majority

of his fellow countrymen. Whilst London, and the London press, still refused to admit that he could ever return to power, there was not a public gathering in the provinces at which the mention of his name was not received with enthusiastic cheering, so that, at last, men were almost afraid to name him in their speeches, lest they should be accused of bidding for the inevitable applause. If there was one town in the country where this enthusiasm ran higher than in any other, it was Leeds. We had no reason, therefore, to fear the taunts of our opponents. We knew that we were being swept on an irresistible current to an assured victory.

On the Saturday before the polling-day a great meeting was held in the Albert Hall, presided over by Kitson. The chief business of the meeting was to listen to a lecture on Mr. Gladstone which I had prepared for the occasion. Never before had I addressed so large an audience, nor one possessed by so boundless an enthusiasm. It was amid an almost incessant accompaniment of rolling cheers that I delivered my hour-long eulogium upon the Liberal leader. I had thought that I had gone as far as any man could in his praise, but I found I had not gone far enough for my audience, and the only sounds of dissent I heard were when I ventured mildly to hint that at some period or other in his career the great man had not shown himself to be infallible. I dwell upon this state of public feeling because it ought to be understood by those who wish to appreciate aright the history of our country at that period. I do not think I go too far when I say that the feeling entertained towards Mr. Gladstone in 1880 by the great majority

of the people of these islands was nothing less than idolatrous. Any smaller man must have been intoxicated by the knowledge of the feeling he had thus aroused. It says much for Mr. Gladstone that, so far from showing any signs of intoxication or personal exultation, from first to last he seemed to regard his hold upon the masses of the people simply as one of the assets in the cause of which he had made himself the champion.

After I had finished my lecture in the Albert Hall a young man, then unknown to me, and who was described as an Oxford don, was called upon to address the meeting. This was Mr. Arthur Acland, subsequently a member of Mr. Gladstone's last Cabinet. The next day I wrote to Mrs. Gladstone—for all direct communication with her husband was forbidden—telling her how the contest was going, and predicting that not less than twenty thousand electors would vote for her husband on the polling day. My prediction was more than fulfilled, for when the votes were counted it was found that Mr. Gladstone's stood at the remarkable number of 24,622, whilst Mr. Barran came next to him with 23,674. Mr. W. L. Jackson (afterwards Chief Secretary for Ireland), the successful Conservative candidate, was more than ten thousand below the number secured by Mr. Gladstone. It was, indeed, a famous victory; and when I parted from Kitson and Mathers after the declaration of the poll, whilst we all felt more than repaid for the toil and anxiety of months, we admitted, with a certain amount of sadness, that we could never hope to repeat such a success. "Whatever happens, we shall never see 1880 again," said Kitson, and he spoke truly. Mrs. Gladstone, on

receipt of my letter, had written to me expressing her warm thanks for what "the dear people of Leeds" were doing, but she said not a word about her husband, nor did we receive a sign or acknowledgment of the stupendous victory—a victory which had staggered the whole country, and opened the eyes even of the London clubs to Mr. Gladstone's real position—whilst the Midlothian contest remained in suspense. We heard, indeed, from a private source, that the company assembled with Mr. Gladstone under Lord Rosebery's roof at Dalmeny had "jumped for joy" when the telegram announcing the Leeds result had arrived. But that was all.

A few days later Midlothian also spoke, and in turn elected Mr. Gladstone as its representative. Within an hour of the declaration of the poll in Edinburgh, Kitson received a telegram from Mr. Gladstone, thanking Leeds for all that it had done. It was characteristic of the great man's businesslike habits and careful attention to small details that the telegram was so worded as to come within the limits of the shilling rate which was then the minimum charge for telegraphic messages. A day or two later Mr. Gladstone wrote fully and most cordially in acknowledgment of the great services which had been rendered to him and to the Liberal cause by the party in Leeds. But his real thanks were given to us more than a year after, when he paid a memorable visit to the town, of which I shall have occasion to speak later.

A few weeks afterwards, when the Gladstone Ministry had been formed, and the new Parliament, with its overwhelming Liberal majority,

had met, we had fresh reason to acknowledge the unique and astounding position of supremacy which Mr. Gladstone had secured among his fellow countrymen. He had, as from the first was anticipated, elected to sit for Midlothian, and there was consequently a vacancy for Leeds. All the heart had been taken out of the Tories of the borough by the beating they had received, and their leaders courteously informed us that they would not oppose any candidate whom we might elect. We had, it need hardly be said, many applicants for this safe seat, but we—I speak of the recognised leaders of the Liberal party in the town—had fixed upon one man to fill the vacancy. This was Edward Baines, who had been, as I have told on a previous page, so scurvily treated by the teetotallers in 1874. The executive committee of the Association agreed by a unanimous vote to propose Mr. Baines to the Four Hundred as the new candidate in place of Mr. Gladstone. But we reckoned without our host, and, above all, we had failed to give due weight to the overwhelming strength of the Gladstone cult.

When we met the Four Hundred, and Mr. Baines was duly proposed and seconded in the name of the executive committee, we found that the proposition was but coldly received; nor were we long left in doubt as to the reason. Someone in the body of the hall got up and proposed that Mr. Herbert Gladstone should be the Liberal candidate. Herbert Gladstone was at that time a stranger to me, and I believe to every other man in the room. All that we knew of him was that he was Mr. Gladstone's youngest son, that

he was twenty-five years of age, and that he had just been defeated by Lord George Hamilton in the contest for Middlesex. No member of Mr. Gladstone's family had suggested Herbert's name to us, and we had naturally felt that the first claim to the vacant seat lay with our old representative and honoured fellow-townsman. But it was useless to struggle against the glamour of the name of Gladstone. The whole meeting broke away from its recognised leaders, and adopted with enthusiasm the candidature of Herbert Gladstone. Looking back, I cannot pretend to regret its decision. Though we knew nothing of Herbert Gladstone at the time, when we did get to know him, a few weeks later, we found him to be a young man of the highest promise, of exceptional talents, and of great amiability of character. The Liberals of Leeds ratified the verdict of the Four Hundred, and he was elected almost by acclamation to be the representative of the town in Parliament—a position which he still holds. The incident of his election when personally quite unknown is, however, conclusive as to the extent of his father's influence among the electors of the country.

In those days, it is no reflection upon Herbert Gladstone's abilities to say that one of the most powerful influences in his favour was his appearance. The young women of Leeds of the working-class formed the highest estimate of his good looks, and whenever he appeared in public a crowd of them gathered to feast their eyes upon his pleasant and handsome features. In the later elections that took place during my residence at Leeds I always accompanied him in his drive through his constituency on the polling day. Wherever our carriage

stopped, a group of young women flocked round it, and Gladstone had to listen to their somewhat embarrassing comments upon his appearance—comments, I ought to say, that were uniformly favourable. In the 1885 election, which took place in November, we had drawn up in front of one of the Liberal clubs, and he had gone inside the building to interview his committee. As he disappeared from view, the young women burst forth in their usual praise of his appearance. "Eh, but isn't he good-looking? Shouldn't I like to kiss him!" said one of the girls who was standing at my elbow. "Would you really?" I said, anxious for some relief to the grave business of the day; and the girl repeated her declaration. "Then when he comes out of the club," said I, "you may give him a kiss if you like." And, to my great amusement, when the candidate reappeared, a pair of buxom arms were suddenly thrown round his neck, and a good-looking girl kissed him heartily. The crowd cheered with enthusiasm, all the more because of the blush which spread over the features of the ingenuous candidate thus taken by surprise. But kisses, as we learnt long ago, are not to be despised as electioneering weapons.

It was in October, 1881, that the Prime Minister came to Leeds to thank us for his election in the previous year. Among the many political meetings, or series of meetings, that I remember, I can call to mind none like this. For weeks before the event we of the Liberal Committee were engaged in preparing for it. Mr. Gladstone was to arrive on the Thursday evening, and to leave on Saturday evening. Into the forty-eight hours of his visit

a series of engagements was packed to which a week might well have been devoted. On the first evening he was formally welcomed to the town, which had been decorated for the occasion as though for a royal visit. Afterwards a large dinner party was held at the residence of his host, Mr. (now Sir James) Kitson. On the Friday he received an address from the Mayor and Corporation, and another from the Chamber of Commerce, to both of which he replied in speeches of some length. A little later in the day a great meeting was held in the Victoria Hall, at which addresses were presented to him from all the Liberal Associations of Yorkshire, and he responded in a very fine speech that lasted an hour. In the evening he attended a great banquet at which thirteen hundred persons sat down to dinner in a noble hall specially erected for the occasion, whilst the day's work ended with a vast torchlight procession from the dining-hall in the heart of Leeds to Kitson's residence at Headingley.

On the Saturday, after some minor engagements, the character of which I forget, but which involved a certain amount of speech-making, Mr. Gladstone was entertained at luncheon in the Victoria Hall by the Leeds Liberal Club, of which I was the honorary secretary; and after speaking there he went direct to the temporary building erected in the Cloth-hall yard, and there addressed a mass meeting of many thousands of persons. Afterwards he attended a large dinner party at the house of Mr. Barran, and at ten o'clock departed from Leeds by special train for Hawarden. It will be seen that the burden of work laid upon him was enormous, especially considering the fact

that he was already in his seventy-second year. Yet his wonderful constitution and untiring energy enabled him to go through the whole programme not only with apparent ease, but with an exuberant vitality that seemed to suggest that if his engagements had been twice as numerous he would have been equal to them all. I doubt if any other statesman ever before got through so much work and speech-making in the course of a couple of days.

As I look back now, after the lapse of many years, upon that memorable time—for the Leeds visit was memorable, not only in Mr. Gladstone's career, but in the political history of the country—the two speeches which stand out in greatest prominence are those which he delivered at the banquet on the Friday evening, and the mass meeting on the Saturday afternoon. The banquet narrowly escaped being a terrible fiasco. For the first time in my association with them, I had a difference of opinion with Kitson and Mathers regarding the arrangements for the dinner. The cost of erecting the special dining-hall was, of course, very considerable. I proposed that it should be met by a uniform charge of two guineas for the dinner tickets. My friends, on the other hand, prepared an elaborate plan by which the tickets were to be charged at different rates from one guinea up to five, according to the position of the seats. In this way more money was to be obtained, but it was at the cost of extra labour on the part of the executive, and of a good deal of grumbling from those local Liberals who had helped us most earnestly in the 1880 election, but who could not afford to pay the very high price demanded for the best seats. The

allotment of these variously priced seats at the banquet was a heavy task, and it was undertaken by Mathers. Somehow or other he was delayed in his work until two days before the dinner was to take place, and then he was seized with sudden illness.

I was called in to take his place, and discovered an alarming state of affairs. It was Wednesday night, Mr. Gladstone was to arrive on Thursday, and his heavy round of engagements was to begin on Friday morning. More than thirty thousand tickets had to be sent out to all parts of the country for the various meetings, and on Wednesday night not one ticket had been despatched. Moreover, Mathers had prepared so elaborate a scheme for the allotment and registration of all the tickets applied for, that a rapid calculation satisfied me that we could not possibly despatch the last of the tickets until at least two days after Mr. Gladstone's departure from Leeds. This was rather a terrible discovery to be made on the eve of the Premier's arrival. The knot had to be cut instead of being unravelled. I put aside the elaborate and irreproachable volumes in which Mathers and his staff had been entering the tickets at the time when he was seized with illness, and, with the help of a sixpenny memorandum book and half a dozen smart bank clerks, succeeded in allotting and posting the whole of the thirty thousand tickets between ten o'clock on Wednesday night and eight o'clock on Thursday morning. I never worked harder in my life, but when my work was done, and the tickets had all passed beyond my control, I fell into a terrible state of panic. I was firmly convinced that in my rapid allotment

of seats to the five different orders of banqueters I had made the most hideous blunders, and I expected nothing less than a riot when the company assembled in the dining-hall. To my unfeigned astonishment, my fears proved to be utterly unfounded. There was a seat for everybody, and everybody got a seat, though to this day I have a shrewd suspicion that more than one gentleman who had paid five guineas for his place found himself relegated to a one guinea seat. But what did it matter? People had come to hear Mr. Gladstone, and so long as they succeeded in this they were indifferent to everything else.

Mr. Gladstone's speech at the dinner was the famous one in which he discussed the Irish question, warned Mr. Parnell of the dangers of the course upon which he had embarked, and declared emphatically that the resources of civilisation were not exhausted. He did not take his seat at the high table in the hall where Sir James Kitson presided until dinner was over and the speeches were about to begin. I observed that when he did so, after having gazed with admiration upon the brilliant scene, he leant forward, and, covering his face with both hands, remained for some time in that attitude. On the following evening I sat next to Mrs. Gladstone at dinner at Sir John Barran's house. She asked me if I had observed this action of her husband's, and on my answering in the affirmative, she said to me, "He was praying. You know, he always prays before he makes an important speech, and he felt that speech very much. What do you think he said to me last night after he had gone to his dressing-room? 'My dear, if I were twenty years younger, I should

go to Ireland myself as Irish Secretary.'" The speech was a great oratorical success, and at the close of the banquet, as I have said, an immense torchlight procession, which had been carefully organised by the local committee, conducted the Premier and his wife from the banqueting hall to the residence of Kitson at Headingley. The procession had to pass across Woodhouse Moor, and I do not think I ever witnessed a more effective spectacle of the kind.

The speech which, to my mind, ranked next in importance and interest to this at the dinner was that which Mr. Gladstone delivered on the following day to the mass meeting of Leeds working men. Fully thirty thousand persons attended this meeting, which, like the dinner, took place in a temporary building. It was crowded to suffocation—literally to suffocation. When I arrived, shortly before the proceedings began, I found that the whole thirty thousand people were gasping for breath, and that many were fainting. We had quite forgotten to arrange for the ventilation of the vast hall! Things looked very serious. The hubbub was indescribable, and the sufferings of the crowd were so great that it was clearly impossible that, under the conditions prevailing, any meeting could be held. Fortunately, there were active and willing workers on the spot, and a band of young men was organised who, mounting to the temporary roof of the hall, tore the planking open, and quickly relieved the pressure upon the sufferers beneath. But even when they had been supplied with air the thirty thousand were anything but comfortable. They were tightly packed together in a sweltering

mass, and in no condition to listen patiently to speeches. The noise and hubbub was little short of deafening.

The Chairman, having briefly addressed the meeting in dumb show, called upon one eminent Liberal after another to move the preliminary resolutions. Not a word that any one of these gentlemen said could be heard a yard beyond the limits of the platform. It seemed that nothing could be done to reduce the vast audience to silence, and we were in despair at the thought that Mr. Gladstone would have to face so severe an ordeal. When at last his turn came, and he stepped to the front of the platform, thirty thousand throats sent up such a shout that it seemed to shake the building. Again and again for a space of some minutes it was renewed, whilst the orator stood, pale and motionless. What could one voice have done against thirty thousand? Then, just as the cheering seemed to be subsiding, someone started "For he's a jolly good fellow," and the whole thirty thousand joined in the song. After that it took some minutes for them all to settle down again, and still there went on that undercurrent of murmuring talk which seemed to make the attempt of anyone to address the gigantic meeting hopeless. But suddenly Mr. Gladstone raised his hand, and it was almost as if a miracle had happened. In an instant there was a deathlike silence in the hall, and every man in it seemed to be holding his breath. The speaker's voice rang out, clear and musical as of old, and it reached to the furthest corners of the mighty apartment. But he had not got further than the conventional opening words when his audience seemed to go mad with

delight. A frenzied burst of cheering, far exceeding that which had welcomed him on his first appearance, proclaimed the joy with which they had heard the voice of the man they adored.

Again it was some minutes before Mr. Gladstone was allowed to proceed, but once more his uplifted hand ensured silence, and from that moment until he had reached the end of an hour's speech, every syllable that he uttered was heard distinctly by his thirty thousand listeners. It was, I think, the passionate eagerness of the audience to hear his voice, and their outburst of delight when its notes first fell upon their ears, that formed the most striking feature of that great meeting. Perhaps there was something almost idolatrous in the reception given to the statesman. It would have turned the heads of most men. The wonder is that it affected Mr. Gladstone so slightly. Yet I must say again that one must have been present at scenes like this in order to appreciate the real position of this remarkable man at this the very zenith of his political career. I remember that this speech, which was received with so intense an enthusiasm by all who heard it, contained the speaker's defence of what is known as the Majuba Hill policy. To those of us who were under the wand of the magician it seemed that no other defence was needed.

I had an opportunity, when the meeting was over, of seeing what effect the physical effort of making an hour's speech to an audience of thirty thousand had upon Mr. Gladstone. When I went into the committee room he was half reclining in an armchair, wrapped in a large cloak. His eyes were closed, his face was deathly pale, his whole

aspect that of a man who was absolutely exhausted. Mrs. Gladstone brought him a cup of tea, but even as he drank his eyes were shut. To me, who had never seen him in this state before, it was alarming to observe him in a condition of positive collapse. Yet a few hours later he was the life and soul of a large dinner party. That dinner is memorable to me, because it was the first occasion on which I met Mr. Gladstone in private. I had a good opportunity of seeing that charming personal courtesy which distinguished him in all his social relationships. I was introduced to him by our host across the dinner-table, and he immediately plunged into a discussion about newspapers and distinguished journalists who were known to me personally. I remember he paid a great compliment to the *Standard*, saying that it was a newspaper he always liked to read because he always found it to be fair and honest. "When I read a bad leader in the *Standard*," he said, "I say to myself, Mr. Mudford must be taking a holiday." I duly reported this saying to Mudford afterwards, and I know that this praise from one whom he had often criticised so severely afforded that distinguished editor intense pleasure.

When Mr. Gladstone left Leeds after his stay of little more than forty-eight hours, he might safely have used the words of Julius Cæsar. He had conquered everybody. Even his political opponents were for the moment subdued by the magic of his eloquence; whilst those who, like myself, had for the first time enjoyed direct personal intercourse with him were completely subjugated by the fascination of his manner, and those remarkable social and intellectual gifts which made him so

long the foremost figure in English society. Of course, to one who had been a Gladstonian ever since those early days in the 'sixties at Newcastle of which I have spoken in a previous chapter, the joy of knowing the great man in the flesh was very great. Yet not even the strength of my admiration for one so supremely gifted, so ardent in his faith, and so strenuous in his actions made of me a blind follower of his leadership. Not many months after that meeting with him at Leeds I found myself sharply separated from him in a political controversy of which I shall soon have to speak.

I found refreshment after the fatigues connected with the Leeds gatherings in an excursion to Tunis. In 1881 the French, upon a distinctly fraudulent pretext, had invaded the territories of the Bey of Tunis. Their professed purpose was to punish a certain tribe of "Kroumirs," who, it was alleged, had committed outrages in Algeria. The Kroumirs, as it turned out, were a product of the imagination of M. Roustan, the diplomatic agent of France in Tunis. No such tribe was known to the Tunisians, but the pretext served, and Tunis was invaded. The truth, as the world now knows, was that France was resolved to have some compensation for our ill-starred acquisition of Cyprus. She dared not move in the direction of Morocco, because of the jealousy of the other Powers of Europe; but she had obtained the tacit consent of Prince Bismarck to the Tunisian expedition. Of the pledges she gave as to the objects and the limitations of that expedition I need not speak. Yet one is entitled to remember that if the force of circumstances has compelled our neighbours to break

their word with regard to Tunis, we are equally justified in alleging the same reason for the breach of our own promises concerning Egypt.

My friend Mudford gave me a commission to act as special correspondent of the *Standard* in Tunis, and I went there accordingly to spend a few interesting weeks in studying on the spot one of the burning questions of the day. I shall not inflict upon my reader the story of my trip. I feel the less inclined to do so because I was ill-advised enough after my return to publish that story in a volume called "The Land of the Bey." The most interesting fact connected with that volume is one that happened in quite recent years. A gentleman from the Inland Revenue Office called upon me, and in a most courteous manner drew my attention to the fact that I had not, in my income-tax returns, included the profit I had received from this book. It had taken the department just nineteen years to discover the existence of this precious volume. The discovery, though belated, did great credit to the zeal and industry of somebody connected with the Inland Revenue, for I am convinced that he is the only person, myself excepted, who knew that the book had been written. I had clean forgotten its existence myself when it was recalled to my memory in this amusing fashion. My visitor from the Inland Revenue Office smiled sweetly when I explained to him why no profits from this publication had ever swelled my meagre income-tax returns. It was a case of the Spanish Fleet over again. I had never seen those literary profits even to the amount of sixpence, and I could not therefore be expected to cause

the collectors of her Majesty's Revenue to succeed where I had failed.

My stay in Tunis was not only interesting but somewhat adventurous. There was only one Englishman besides myself resident in the city of Tunis while I was there. This was Mr. A. M. Broadley, who was at that time acting as the correspondent of the *Times*, and whose ability had enabled him to create a diplomatic question, which he called the Enfida Case, out of a trumpery law-suit in which he acted for a rich Arab, called, if I remember aright, General Benayid. Mr. Broadley subsequently became known to fame for the active part he took in defending Arabi Pasha at Cairo. I only mention him now because of the remarkable forecast which he made on the first evening on which I met him in his house in Tunis. Producing a map of the Eastern Hemisphere he pointed out to me what he called the zone of disturbance, and assured me that within the next ten years the eyes of the world would be riveted upon that zone. Roughly speaking, the zone was the belt of the Mahommedan races, extending from Morocco in the west to India in the east. The disturbances which he predicted would come he traced in the first instance from our annexation of Cyprus, and the consequent invasion of Tunis by France. He foretold with great precision the rise of the Mahdi, and the growth of religious fanaticism in the Soudan ; and he indicated that through Asia Minor, Persia, and Afghanistan a wave of unrest was running which must have serious consequences for the Christain Powers in the near future. Many times in later days I had occasion to remember the wonderfully clear and precise predictions of Mr. Broadley, as

he delivered them to me in his old Arab house in Tunis.

One charming friend I made during my visit. This was the English Consul-General, Mr. Reade, who entertained me in his beautiful house at the Marsa, close to the site of Carthage. A pleasant, rather grave, and thoughtful man, Mr. Reade was a mine of information regarding earlier days in Tunis, when the Bey was a real ruler and the slave-market in the old Bazaar was still the scene of a merchandise in flesh and blood. His father had been Consul-General in Tunis when the influence of Great Britain was supreme, and he had inherited his father's popularity and personal prestige. Too clearly he foresaw that the result of the French foray upon the unoffending principality must be its absorption into French territory, and the consequent loss of England's position and influence in that part of the Mediterranean. All his fears have been more than realised. In 1881 it was the English Consul-General who was the most important person in Tunis—more important in many respects than the Bey himself. In the Bazaars every shop was filled with English goods, whilst many wealthy Tunisians had found protection by securing their recognition as English subjects. In the old Consulate at the gates of the city an English, or at least a Maltese, judge administered justice under the red ensign daily. The travelling Englishman hardly seemed to have left the shelter of his own flag when he found himself in the land of the Bey. All this is changed now. France has elbowed England out of Tunis. Our Consul—he is no longer Consul-General—is a subordinate official. English commerce has

dwindled away to comparative insignificance. French shops supply the residents with all they require, and Great Britain has become of no account. This is the direct result of Lord Beaconsfield's action in taking possession of Cyprus in 1878. Would to Heaven that this were the whole of the price we have had to pay for that fatal piece of folly!

Whilst I was in Tunis I went to the little English graveyard, which lies enclosed by houses in the heart of the old city. Here are the graves of some Englishmen who were the captives of Tunisian pirates in the old days when Barbary rovers were still the curse of the Mediterranean. I found there also, in that lonely and neglected spot, the grave of Howard Payne, the author of "Home, Sweet Home." It seemed cruel that he, who had touched so deep and true a chord in the hearts of millions, should himself be fated to rest so far from home. I wrote to the newspapers to draw attention to this fact. Whether my letters had in themselves any effect I do not pretend to say, but I am glad to know that since then Payne's body has been removed to America and buried in his native place.

In returning from Tunis I came by way of Malta and Naples, where I got an Orient steamer which brought me to Plymouth. It was in sailing through the Straits of Messina on my way to Naples that I met with one of those strange—but by no means rare—coincidences that prove the smallness of the world, or, at least, of that part of it with which any one man is acquainted. I was sitting on the upper deck of the steamer, gazing at Etna, as its snow-shrouded peak was revealed in the brilliant moonlight, when a chance fellow-traveller began to talk about the coincidences so

common in foreign travel. I told him that one of my strangest experiences of the kind was the following. In the previous September I was staying at the Hôtel Belle Vue at The Hague, and after dinner one evening went into the reading room to get a peep at the *Times*. A pleasant-looking elderly gentleman was reading it when I entered. Perhaps he saw the look of disappointment on my face when I found that the coveted journal was engaged. At any rate, he very courteously offered it to me, and by way of opening a conversation drew my attention to an article it contained about the Liverpool docks. When I had glanced through the paper he resumed the conversation about Liverpool, and asked if I knew many persons in that city. I was compelled to admit that I knew only one, a Liverpool clergyman named Postance, my acquaintance with him being of the slightest. "Ah," said my friend, "if you know the Reverend Henry Postance, you have possibly heard him speak of his son Alfred?" I replied that I knew Alfred Postance better than I knew his father, and that I had, as a matter of fact, travelled to Malta with him shortly before his death, which took place in that island. "Then," pursued my interlocutor, "since you knew Alfred Postance, you might like to read a little sketch of his life that has been written by a friend. I think I could procure the loan of a copy for you." I thanked the gentleman for his offer, but explained that it was not necessary that I should avail myself of it, as Mr. Postance senior had already sent me a copy of the work in question. The old gentleman's eyes glistened when I said this, and with an air of some pride he said: "Since you have read

that little book, you will, I am sure, be interested to know that it was I who published it." "Well, I am rather interested," I replied, "because it was I who wrote it."

This was the story which I chanced to tell on the deck of the steamboat to my unknown fellow-traveller. I had no sooner finished it than he said, "Then you are Mr. Wemyss Reid. Your account of Alfred Postance was the last thing I read before leaving my home in Malta." The double coincidence was certainly rather startling, and it was increased when I found that I and this second stranger had on the same day visited the grave of Alfred Postance at Valetta for the same purpose—to pluck a spray of flowers to send to his father in Liverpool. Yes, the world *is* small!

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCERNING W. E. FORSTER AND OTHERS.

The Beginning of Mr. Stead's Journalistic Career—His Methods—Birth of the New Journalism—Madame Novikoff and Mr. Stead—Mr. Stead's Attacks upon Joseph Cowen—How he dealt with a Remonstrance—W. E. Forster—Mr. Chamberlain's Antagonism—The *Leeds Mercury's* Defence of Forster—How he was Jockeyed out of the Cabinet—Forster's Resignation—News of the Phœnix Park Murders—Forster's Reflections—Mr. Gladstone's Pity for Social Outcasts—Mr. Chamberlain's Brothers Blackballed at the Reform—Failure of an Attempt to Crush the *Leeds Mercury*—Forster's Gratitude.

I NOW approach an episode in my life which not only had a strong and permanent influence on my own career, but is of interest in its bearing on the politics of my time. I refer to my intimate friendship with William Edward Forster, and to my close association with him in the stormy episodes which attended the close of his career as a Minister of the Crown. But before I enter into the story of my relations with this truly great and noble-minded man, I may say something about another distinguished person who shared my regard for Mr. Forster, though we had, perhaps, few other tastes in common. One day in 1871 or 1872—that is to say, soon after I became editor of the *Leeds Mercury*—I was told on returning home that a gentleman was waiting to see me who had brought a letter of introduction, which my servant placed in my hands. The letter was from my father, and its object was to introduce to me the son of his

old friend, the Rev. William Stead, of Howden, near Newcastle. I need not say that an introduction from my father would in itself have sufficed to ensure for the bearer a warm reception; but in any case the story which young Mr. Stead had to tell me at once enlisted my interest and sympathy. Like myself, he was the son of a Nonconformist minister, and on leaving school he had entered upon a business career as a clerk on the quayside at Newcastle. But he had been irresistibly drawn towards journalism, just as I myself had been a dozen years earlier, and after contributing articles to various newspapers, he had received the offer of the editorship of the *Northern Echo*, a halfpenny newspaper which had been recently established at Darlington.

Strange to say, when this post was offered to and accepted by him, he was not only absolutely without editorial experience, but, as he himself told me, had never seen the inside of a newspaper office in his life. With that remarkable promptitude and directness of action which, as I afterwards discovered, was one of his great characteristics, he had no sooner accepted the editorship than he sought to qualify himself for it by making the acquaintance and obtaining the advice of someone who had actual experience in editorial work. It happened that I was the only editor to whom he could get a personal introduction, and so he came to me at Leeds to get what guidance and help I could afford him at the outset of his journalistic career. Remembering to what a height of fame he has since risen as a journalist, I confess that I look back upon the days when he thus approached me as a neophyte with some amuse-

ment. No doubt I was already, in his eyes, one of the old fogeys of the Press, and it must be admitted that there was something of the ugly duckling about his first appearance in my comparatively tame editorial establishment.

Stead interested me immensely during this first visit that he paid me. He was pleasingly distinguished by an entire lack of diffidence, and from the first made no concealment of his own views upon any of the subjects we discussed together. It is true that when I took him down to the *Mercury* office that evening, and wrote my leader whilst he sat at my desk beside me, he regarded me with the admiring eyes of the novice; but he had, even then, his own ideas as to how leaders ought to be written and newspapers edited, and he did not affect to conceal them. There was something that was irresistible in his candour, his enthusiasm, and his self-confidence. The Press was the greatest agency for influencing public opinion in the world. It was the true and only lever by which Thrones and Governments could be shaken and the masses of the people raised. In all this I was in strong sympathy with his opinions. But I was staggered by the audacity of the schemes for revolutionising English journalism which he poured into my ears on this the first evening on which he had ever entered a newspaper office. For hour after hour he talked with an ardour and a freshness which delighted me. If he had come to me in the guise of a pupil, he very quickly reversed our positions, and lectured me for my own good on questions of journalistic usage which I thought I had settled for myself a dozen years before I had met him.

Often I thought his ideas ridiculous: once

or twice I thought that he himself must be mad; but even then I admired his splendid enthusiasm and his engaging frankness. Occasionally I said to him, "If you were ever to get your way, you would make the Press a wonderful thing, no doubt; but you would make the Pressman the best-hated creature in the Universe." At this he would burst into a roar of laughter, in which I was constrained to join. "I see, you think I'm crazy," he said once. "Well, not crazy, perhaps, but distinctly eccentric. You will come all right, however, when you have had a little experience." Thus, in my blind belief in my own superior experience and wisdom, I thought and spoke. Many a time since then I have recalled that long night's talk when I have recognised in some daring development of modern journalism one of the many schemes which Stead then flashed before my eyes. We had talked—or, rather, he had talked—for hours after getting home from work. I was far from being weary of his conversation, but I knew that the night had passed, and I rose and drew aside the curtains. Never shall I forget the look of amazement that overspread Stead's face when the sunshine streamed into the room. "Why, it is daylight!" he exclaimed, with an air of bewilderment. "I never sat up till daylight in my life before."

This was my first knowledge of one of the most remarkable and brilliant journalists of my time. We parted with, I think, mutual feelings of regard and goodwill, feelings which I, at least, have never lost. I recognised my visitor from the first as a man of remarkable gifts, of something that came near to genius. I recognised,

too, his honesty and sincerity, though I had, even then, forebodings as to what might be the consequences of his impetuous ardour and reckless defiance of old customs and conventions.

After this, I heard a good deal from Stead during his remarkable editorship of the *Northern Echo*, nor was I long in discovering that he was really determined to put what I regarded as his wild theories of journalism into practice. Of course, it took time to enable him to make his personality felt in the little paper he edited, but he took care to keep me acquainted with all that he was doing. Whenever an article of special interest appeared in the *Echo* I received a copy of it, marked with a blue pencil by Stead. At the end of twelve months from his first engagement as editor, he wrote to me asking if I would give him my opinion in writing of his work during the year, and the capacity he had shown as a journalist. With great willingness I wrote to express my high opinion, not only of his ability, but of his growing aptitude as an editor. Back in a few days came a reply from this extraordinary man. It was to tell me that he had shown my letter to the proprietor of the *Northern Echo*, Mr. Bell, and on the strength of it had succeeded in obtaining an increase of salary, an increase which I am sure was fully deserved. For two years, if I remember aright, he went through this formality. I am confident that Mr. Stead himself, if he should read these lines, will not make any objection to my revelation of these little episodes in his early career. I have told them because, whilst they are so thoroughly characteristic of the man, they are not in any way derogatory to his reputation.

By-and-by, however, a change took place in our relationship. Stead was rapidly working his way to the front, and some of the means which he employed did not commend themselves to my judgment. For example, he was in the habit of sending marked copies of any article he wrote on political questions to the statesmen or other public men to whom he had chanced to refer. I had always been very sensitive myself as to this practice, regarding it as an attempt to force oneself upon the notice of public men in a way that was not consistent with an editor's independence, to say nothing of his dignity.

I may have been wrong in my view. Certainly I have known other journalists besides Stead who adopted his practice, and I have no right to sit in judgment upon any of them. But my personal view was that an editor ought to say honestly what he thought for the benefit of the readers of his journal, and that he ought neither to obtrude his own individuality upon those readers, nor to seek to come into close contact with the men whose actions it was his duty to criticise. Long before this period in my life I had laid down a rule for myself which I have consistently observed ever since. This was that I would never seek an introduction to any public man, or bring under his personal notice anything that I had written. Stead took another course, and though I could no longer regard him as a *protégé* of my own, I did not like it, and I daresay I did not conceal my feelings from him. But he could well afford to treat my disapproval with contempt, for his policy answered even beyond his own expectation. The fact that his paper was a very

small one, published in a small town, gave, I have no doubt, additional zest to his very acute and intelligent criticisms of public affairs. Mr. Bright, if I remember rightly, was the first public man of eminence who drew attention to the articles in the *Northern Echo*, and he very soon afterwards received a visit from the enterprising editor. Then Stead, carrying still further his theory of a journalist's duties, sought interviews with others among the foremost men of the time. Carlyle was one of those who succumbed to his fascinations, and when Carlyle one day referred to him in conversation as "that good man Stead," the fact quickly became known to the public. Mr. Forster was another of Stead's earlier heroes and friends, and by-and-by the young editor at Darlington became known to a considerable circle of prominent persons. Thus was the New Journalism born. To me, as an Old Journalist, it is not a thing with which I can pretend to have much sympathy, but I must acknowledge its brightness, its alertness, its close grip of actualities, and its rapid and remarkable success. I need hardly say that it was no longer necessary for the editor of the *Northern Echo*, the friend of many of the distinguished personages of the day, to seek my testimony as to his value to his employer. He quickly became recognised for what he was—a journalist of exceptional capacity and of great originality and daring.

Differences upon political questions drove us further apart, however, than any question of the ethics of editorial conduct. The Eastern Question, of which I have already spoken, excited Stead greatly, and he distinguished himself not so much by the vehemence of his attacks upon the

unspeakable Turk, as by his uncompromising championship of Russia and her policy in South-Eastern Europe. It was not a popular line to take, but Stead followed it with something like enthusiasm. It was at this time that he fell under the influence of Madame Novikoff, who, whether accredited or unaccredited, was generally regarded as the unofficial representative of Russia in this country. She was, and is, a lady of great talent and plausibility, and she undoubtedly exercised at one time an extraordinary amount of influence over many distinguished British politicians. I am not prepared to say that Stead took his inspiration upon Russian politics solely from Madame Novikoff; but at any rate he never wrote anything in the *Northern Echo* in those days of which that lady could not heartily approve, and thus he made another powerful and enthusiastic friend in the political society of our time.

Years afterwards, somewhere in the 'nineties, I happened to sit beside Madame Novikoff at a luncheon party in Mayfair. "I believe you know my great friend, Stead?" she said, by way of opening our conversation at the table. I told her I had known him for many years. "And what do you think of him?" she asked, with an air of innocent curiosity that sat well upon her guileless countenance. "Is he not wonderful? I think him, for my part, one of the greatest men alive. What do you think?" I replied, in a more restrained spirit, that I thought him extremely able, and that he had certainly accomplished some wonderful achievements as a journalist. "Ah!" said Madame Novikoff, with an air of quickened curiosity, "you think that?

Now tell me what, in your opinion, is his most wonderful achievement." I told her that I thought it was his success in championing the cause of a certain lady. (The story has nothing to do with this narrative, but it was a *cause célèbre* in which Stead employed the methods of the New Journalism in order to secure justice for a woman who had been gravely wronged.) No sooner had I explained myself to Madame Novikoff than that lady's face fell. "Ah, I am sorry to hear you say that. That was not his greatest achievement. But Stead has always been ready to go crusading at a woman's bidding." Madame Novikoff must have known what she was talking about.

Among the leading politicians of the North in those days was my old friend and fellow-townsman, Joseph Cowen, of Newcastle. He had been to some extent alienated from Mr. Gladstone and from the Liberal party by disappointment, but he still called himself a Liberal, and there was no reason to doubt that his political instincts were sound, and that he might again become one of the Liberal leaders of the North. He took, as he had always taken, a strong line with regard to Russia, which he looked upon as the parent of Continental despotism and the traditional enemy of human freedom. Mr. Stead, full of zeal for the cause represented by Madame Novikoff, made a series of vehement and persistent attacks upon Cowen because of his views regarding Russia and the Eastern Question generally. One day he sent me one of his marked papers containing a particularly impassioned onslaught upon the member for Newcastle. I considered that he had invited comment by sending me this article, and I wrote to him

to expostulate with him on the line he was taking, pointing out that Cowen, who was a very sensitive man, was not unlikely to be driven out of the party if these attacks were persisted in, and that his loss would be a serious one to the Liberalism of the North of England. I don't think I said anything particularly harsh in this letter, which was in my opinion justified by my relations both with Cowen and with Stead.

The rejoinder was not what I had expected. It came in the shape of an immensely long article in the *Northern Echo* entitled, if I remember aright, "The Editor of the *Leeds Mercury* and Mr. Cowen." In this article something I had written about Cowen in the *Mercury*—I forget what—was held up to ridicule, and was compared with my private sentiments regarding the member for Newcastle as they had been gleaned by Mr. Stead in that night-long conversation under my roof, of which I have spoken in this chapter. Needless to say, my talk was not faithfully remembered or accurately represented. That, in itself, was a small matter, but the illustration thus afforded me of the practical working of the New Journalism was not altogether a pleasant one, and for some years after this episode there was a distinct coolness between Mr. Stead and myself. The incident arouses no bitterness now. Mr. Stead honestly believed that he was entitled to use my frank *obiter dicta* for the purpose of correcting what he regarded as my public errors. I was not the last and by no means the greatest sufferer from this theory on the part of the founder of the New Journalism ; but, as having been in some small degree a sufferer at his hands, I am, perhaps, the better able to bear testimony

to his absolute honesty of intention, and to his unfailing conviction that in even his greatest indiscretions he was acting under the justification of a high moral purpose.

In the spring or summer of 1880 I received a note from John Morley, who had by this time become editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. It was to inform me that he had secured a notable man from my part of the world to assist him in his editorial duties. He was Mr. Stead of Darlington, and Morley wished to know my opinion of him. My reply did not please Mr. Morley; for while I told him how highly I admired Mr. Stead's abilities, I warned him that he would need to be watched closely, as he was a man of such extreme views and of such daring originality in his manner of conducting a journal that, if he were not kept under strict control, he might at any moment seriously commit the newspaper with which he was connected. At the time Morley took this warning with a very bad grace, plainly implying that he thought that my feeling with regard to Mr. Stead was founded on the fact that he was a more real Liberal than myself. But there came a time when the distinguished politician and man of letters acknowledged that my hint had been only too fully justified.

One day in 1879 William Edward Forster came into my room at the *Mercury* office. For some time he had been in the habit of calling at intervals to have a chat with me. I believe that each of us was secretly rather afraid of the other. I had for years regarded him with a strong feeling of admiration, and I looked confidently to him as the man who, when Mr. Gladstone in the fulness of time

retired from public life, would take his place and become the recognised leader of the great forces of English Liberalism. I had supported him with unfaltering loyalty both in his educational policy and at the time when his name was put forward in the candidature for the leadership of the party in 1875, and I found myself in strong sympathy with his views on those foreign and colonial questions on which I could take sides neither with the Little England nor with the Jingo school. Forster's visit was chiefly for the purpose of chatting over the prospects of the Liberal party, but incidentally our conversation turned upon Mr. Stead. "He has one great fault," said Forster, "and that is that he does not mix with other people." Certainly Forster had every reason to think well of Mr. Stead, for he was his loyal friend and admirer in those dark days when few were found to speak well of the member for Bradford.

It was in 1881 that Forster became the target of the missiles of that section of the Liberal party which in those days followed Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain's followers were naturally anxious that their hero should arrive at the summit of his ambition, and Mr. Forster was the man who stood most directly in his path. I do not wish to allege that there were not real differences of opinion between Mr. Forster and Mr. Chamberlain, though when one remembers the subsequent history of the latter it is difficult to understand his constant antagonism to Forster, the founder of the Imperial Federation movement, and the first Liberal Imperialist. But whatever his motives might be, Mr. Chamberlain's dislike of Forster was obvious to everyone. He had powerful means of making

that dislike felt. The caucus in those days was absolutely under his thumb, and at a sign from him more than half the Liberal Associations in the country were inclined to pass any resolution that he was pleased to suggest to them. The *Pall Mall Gazette* became virtually his mouthpiece, and one read it as much in those days to ascertain the thoughts of Mr. Chamberlain as those of its distinguished editor. In the Cabinet he had secured one or two valuable allies, over whom, by virtue of his great abilities, he exercised an extraordinary influence. In the House of Commons the most active wing of the Radical Party was, with certain notable exceptions, devoted to him. He was the man to whom they looked as their leader, and as the future chief of a Radical Administration.

In the winter of 1881–2 all the forces controlled by the caucus were employed in the work of disparaging and weakening Mr. Forster. The latter was engaged in his almost hopeless struggle with the disaffected classes in Ireland—in other words, with four-fifths of the nation. I have told elsewhere the story of Mr. Forster's public career, and it is not necessary that I should enter into any defence of his Irish administration here. But this I must say, that at a time when he was beset with difficulties of the most formidable and distressing kind, and when he had a right to expect the loyal support at least of his own colleagues in the Cabinet, he found himself exposed to intrigues and cruel side-attacks that still further embarrassed him, and that fatally weakened his hands. As the winter passed the storm artificially raised against him increased in violence. All

the animosities of Birmingham were let loose upon his head. The old cries of trimmer and traitor were again raised against him. The Liberal Press, with hardly an exception, took its cue from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whilst the organs of the Conservative party naturally felt under no obligation to defend him from the misrepresentations and innuendoes of his formidable foes in his own party.

I do not think I exaggerate when I say that it was only in the columns of the *Leeds Mercury* that he was consistently and steadily defended. It was a labour of love on my part thus to stand by a man for whom I entertained so great and affectionate an admiration, and who was, as I conceived, being so cruelly ill-treated by those of the same political household as himself. It was said at the time that Forster inspired the *Leeds Mercury*, and that the articles defending him which I published were really written by himself. In the interests of honourable journalism, and of Mr. Forster's reputation, I must state the actual facts. I was, as I have already said, on terms of personal friendship with him, and I was in the fullest sympathy with his Irish policy; but from the moment when he became Chief Secretary until he retired from that office, Forster held no communication with me, either direct or indirect. I never saw him, and he never wrote to me, nor did I address a single word to him. This was characteristic of Forster's high sense of public duty. He was too proud and too high-spirited to try to enlist any man's sympathies, or to secure any newspaper advocacy. Men spoke of him as a clever wire-puller who could manufacture a spurious

public sentiment in his own favour. How little they knew him! If he had chosen to resort to those arts with which his assailants were so familiar he might have won the support of many tongues and pens. He preferred, then as always in his public career, to devote himself with a single-minded purpose to the performance of his duty, leaving the consequences to take care of themselves. It was in this way that it came to pass that his only defender in the Press in those dark and troublous days was a little-known journalist in Yorkshire.

For my part, I look back with pride and deep satisfaction to the line which I then took, and from which I never swerved. It was not a successful line. Mr. Forster's enemies were too powerful for him, and, as everybody knows, he became their victim. But there are better things in this world than success, and I am more content to have been Forster's associate in his unmerited fall than I would have been to share in the personal triumph which Mr. Chamberlain gained over him. Although complaint was made, when my "Life" of Forster appeared, that I had made too full a revelation of Cabinet secrets, the fact remains that a good deal of truth has still to come out with regard to his resignation of office in 1882. I do not propose to lift the veil here, but it is well known that an ingenious trap was laid for him, and that, with characteristic confidence in the good faith of his fellow-men, he walked unsuspectingly into it. His resignation, it will be remembered, was due to his refusal to accept as satisfactory a letter written by Mr. Parnell, in which he undertook, if he were released from

Kilmainham, to give certain assistance to the Government in putting down outrages in Ireland. Forster would willingly have accepted Mr. Parnell's word as a gentleman that he would exert himself to this end, but he was not prepared to accept the skilfully framed words in which Mr. Parnell sought to convey the impression that was desired whilst avoiding all personal responsibility in the matter. Those who wish to know how Mr. Forster was jockeyed out of office must learn the history of Parnell's letter, and how and by whom the sentences were devised which seemed acceptable to the sanguine temperament of Mr. Gladstone, but which Forster, with his closer knowledge of the situation, regarded as wholly unsatisfactory. The time has not yet come for the story to be told, but when the precise facts are revealed they will be found to throw a curious light upon this episode.

Forster's resignation was a great personal blow to me. It was a blow also both to his personal friends and admirers in Yorkshire, and to a large section of politicians who knew him to be an upright and single-minded man, struggling with all his might to maintain order in Ireland and to preserve the unity of the United Kingdom. There was, however, one further step that was possible that would have immeasurably increased our mortification. This was the appointment of Mr. Chamberlain as Forster's successor. Mr. Chamberlain's friends confidently expected that the appointment would be made, and for a day or two it seemed certain that this would be the case. I saw a member of the Government who was the confidential friend of Mr. Gladstone, and told him that if Mr. Chamberlain were to be appointed, the *Leeds Mercury*,

and all whom it could influence in Yorkshire would at once enter upon a most strenuous and thorough-going opposition to the new Irish policy. I was told in reply that, whatever Mr. Chamberlain himself might have expected, Mr. Gladstone had not for a single moment contemplated his appointment to the vacant post, and that his choice had fallen in another quarter.

The Leeds Liberal Club resolved to invite Forster to a complimentary dinner, in order that he might have the assurance that there was one great city, at least, in which he retained the confidence and gratitude of his party. I wrote to Forster to convey this intimation to him, and had a reply, in which he asked me to meet him in London. On Friday, May 6th, 1882, the appointment of Lord Frederick Cavendish as Irish Secretary was announced in Parliament, and the writ moved for his re-election after taking office. The next night, about 11 o'clock, I was sitting in the morning-room at the Reform Club, talking to the late Mr. William Summers, then member for Huddersfield. There were but few men in the room, though amongst those few were one or two Irish members, including Mr. Shaw, who had been Chairman of the Home Rule party in the House of Commons until he was superseded by Mr. Parnell. We had all been reading the telegrams on the board in the hall announcing the enthusiastic reception of the new Lord Lieutenant, Earl Spencer, and the new Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, in Dublin. I was discussing with Summers the meaning of the new departure and of the success of Forster's assailants, when the old hall-porter of the club burst into the room, and in a state of great agitation

announced to us that a message had been received at the Carlton Club stating that the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary had been assassinated. I cannot describe the mingled amazement, horror, and incredulity with which the news was received, but I remember well the extreme distress shown by Mr. Shaw and the other Irish members. "This is the end of Ireland!" cried Mr. Shaw, with tears in his eyes. For some time most of us steadily refused to believe the story, for no authentic news could be gathered respecting it; but, as time passed, the Reform Club was besieged with inquiries from the other clubs in Pall Mall, the members of which naturally supposed that authentic news would be procurable at the Ministerial club. At last someone came in who had been at Lord Frederick's house in Carlton House Terrace, and he brought the dreaded confirmation of the story. The Lord Lieutenant, it is true, had not been attacked, but Lord Frederick had been killed, and with him Mr. Burke, the Under-Secretary. A shudder ran through the crowd when we were told that the vile deed had been done with knives.

Inside the club there was now a large assemblage of members, although it was past midnight. Men came into the club, too, on that eventful night who were not members, but who were moved by an irrepressible anxiety to learn the truth as to what had happened. Among these I remember Abraham Hayward, Q.C., the essayist and Society rattle, who, characteristically enough, proclaimed to us all the fact that the gentleman who accompanied him was my Lord So-and-so. But it was outside the club that I witnessed the most extraordinary scene I ever saw in London. Rumours of

the tragedy had spread through the clubs, but the tidings had not reached the streets. The clubs, as by a common impulse, emptied themselves, and the members with one accord flocked to the Reform. On the broad pavement in Pall Mall some hundreds of men, nearly all in evening dress, were clustered together, discussing in low tones the horrible event, of which, as yet, the details were wholly unknown. On the roadway a hundred cabs were gathered, their drivers evidently bewildered by the unwonted spectacle, and wondering what had brought together in the stillness of the early Sunday morning this unwonted crowd.

Suddenly, as I looked upon the scene from the steps of the club, I saw the crowd fall back on either hand, opening a narrow lane through it. Along this lane, with bent head, came Lord Hartington, brother of one of the murdered men, passing from the newly-made house of mourning in Carlton House Terrace to his home at Devonshire House. No one ventured to speak to him, but every hat was lifted in token of silent sympathy. It was a memorable, never-to-be-forgotten night. Years afterwards I heard from Sir William Harcourt himself an account of how the news first reached London. There was a big Ministerial dinner party, if I remember rightly, at Lord Northbrook's ; Mr. Gladstone was there, and so was Sir William Harcourt, then Home Secretary. Dinner was nearly over when Mr. (now Sir) Howard Vincent, who at that time held a high post at Scotland Yard, arrived and demanded an immediate interview with the Home Secretary. To Sir William he showed the official telegram that had just been received, all other messages having been stopped by the authori-

ties in Dublin. It was decided, after a consultation, that nothing was to be said until the ladies had left the dinner table, and that then the news was to be broken to Mr. Gladstone, who, apart from all other reasons for feeling the tragedy, had the additional one of a close relationship with Lady Frederick Cavendish. Mr. Gladstone, though deeply moved, was then, as always, master of his emotions, and it was he who at once went to Carlton House Terrace to break the dreadful tidings to his niece, Mrs. Gladstone accompanying him on the errand.

There was little sleep that night for any of us who had heard the news before retiring to rest. The next day was such a Sunday as I never remember to have seen in London before or since. The newspapers spread the tidings far and wide. In numberless cases men first learned the news as they were going to church. They turned aside in scores, and hurried down to Pall Mall to learn the latest particulars of a tragedy that was instantly recognised as being one that affected the nation as a whole. From early morning until late at night the fine hall of the Reform Club was crowded with members, and with friends who came to inquire for further news. In the forenoon a strange thing happened. Mr. Forster, the man whose life the villains who struck down Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke had chiefly sought, and who had passed through perils so terrible that even now the recollection of them raises a shudder, came into the club. He was besieged at once by a host of members, but breaking away from them, he came to me, and taking me by the arm, led me to one of the seats in the hall. Instantly, and

as it seemed instinctively, the great crowd of men formed in a semicircle around us, out of earshot, but gazing with wondering and sympathetic eyes upon the man who had escaped so cruel a fate.

I remember the first words that Forster spoke to me. "They may say what they like," he said, "but it is Mr. Parnell who has done this. He is the man who sowed the seed of which this is the fruit." And then he talked of the victims, of Lord Frederick, so gentle, kindly, honourable in all the relations of life, and of Burke, "the most loyal man," he declared, "who ever served the Crown." Indeed, at the moment he seemed to feel the death of poor Burke more acutely than that of Lord Frederick, and he was full of the idea that if he himself had been in Ireland the lives of both would have been saved. "I shall go back to Ireland," he said to me presently. "They must want someone to manage pressing affairs, and I shall tell Mr. Gladstone that I am at his service." He went straight from the club to Downing Street, and saw Mr. Gladstone—who, unlike most other men in London, had been to church that morning. He made the offer, one in every respect noble and magnanimous as well as courageous; but it was not accepted. The bitterness of party passion which had been aroused by the events that culminated in his own resignation had not yet sufficiently subsided to render such a step possible, and Forster, to my keen regret, was not permitted to have this fresh opportunity of showing that unfailing fearlessness in the face of danger which was one of his most eminent characteristics.

On the following day the adjournment of the

House of Commons was moved by Mr. Gladstone in a speech which betrayed his grief and emotion. That evening a certain Irish Tory member was dining out, and he told the following story to a party in which there were women as well as men. "I was crossing St. James's Park after the rising of the House this afternoon, when I saw Mr. Gladstone walking in front of me. For the first time in my life I felt sorry for the fellow, for I knew what a terrible blow this affair must have been to him. I said to myself, 'Well, there was no play-acting in his speech this afternoon, at all events. The fellow really felt what he said.' Can you conceive, then, my indignation when on getting to the top of the steps at the Duke of York's column I saw him lurking behind the column talking to an abandoned woman?"

A lady who was present at the dinner-party, and who was a great admirer of Mr. Gladstone, thought it her duty to write to him, and tell him the charge that had been made against him. She did not mention the name of her informant, but merely stated the facts that had been reported to her. She received an immediate reply, on a postcard. It was as follows:—"The presence of —— was not unperceived on the occasion to which you refer; but the conversation he has reported to you was not of the nature he imagined, and possibly desired." The voice of slander often pursued Mr. Gladstone, but the reply which he gave to this particular accusation was recognised, even by his enemies, as complete and conclusive. All through his life Mr. Gladstone was filled with pity for the outcasts of the streets, and whenever he could hold out a helping hand to them he

did so with a fearlessness that was characteristic of his courage—the courage of the pure in heart.

I must turn aside from the Irish tragedy to speak of a small agitation, in which I and other persons were concerned at the time, that had a certain connection, not with the Phœnix Park murders, but with the events that led up to them. Two of Mr. Chamberlain's brothers had been nominated as candidates for the Reform Club. It was, perhaps, unfortunate for them that they came up for election in this spring of 1882, when there was much hostility towards Mr. Chamberlain himself on the part of many Liberals, who believed that he was intriguing in order to drive Mr. Forster out of the Cabinet. At all events, the two candidates were black-balled, and great was the ferment that arose in consequence. In Birmingham the action of the Reform Club was regarded as an outrageous insult not only to Mr. Chamberlain himself, but to that section of the Liberal party to which he then belonged. "The good people of Birmingham are simply furious," wrote Mr. Chamberlain to his friend, Mr. Peter Rylands, M.P., "and they even talk of marching upon London." It was an astounding assertion, but really Mr. Chamberlain's organs in the Birmingham Press dealt with the black-balling of his brothers in such a fashion as almost to warrant the expectation that Pall Mall would be invaded, and the Reform Club sacked, if it did not repent in dust and ashes of the affront it had offered to the leader of Birmingham Radicalism. Nothing less would suit Mr. Chamberlain and his friends, as an atonement for the misdeeds of the club, than such an alteration

in the rules as would deprive the members of the power of black-balling candidates by transferring elections from the club at large to a special election committee.

I was present at the meeting of the club at which a resolution to this effect was proposed by Lord Hartington. The meeting was held only a couple of days before the Phœnix Park tragedy. It was largely attended, and many distinguished persons were present. "I saw the whole Cabinet crowded into the glass and bottle room," said George Augustus Sala, in speaking of the scene afterwards. Sala himself took a prominent part in the proceedings, for, provoked by a speech from Mr. Bright, in which he had denounced black-balling as an odious and ungentlemanly practice, Sala delivered himself of an impassioned oration in which he asserted that there was no right more sacred in the eyes of every true-born Englishman than the right to black-ball anyone he pleased at a club election. I remember Lord Granville's attempt to reply to Sala's sweeping assertion, but judging by the cheers, it was the essayist, rather than the earl, who had the sympathy of the members. Lord Hartington's resolution was carried by a small majority, and a ballot of the whole club was demanded, to settle the question finally. When this ballot took place, it was seen that the feeling of the club as a whole was distinctly adverse to the proposed change of rules, and Lord Hartington's resolution was rejected by a large majority. The rejection was due in part, at least, to the feeling which Mr. Chamberlain had inspired among the moderate Liberals. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Chamberlain resigned his membership of the club, and

the question of an alteration of the rules fell to the ground.

The Phœnix Park tragedy confirmed many persons in the belief that Forster had been right, and the rest of the Government wrong, with regard to Irish policy. In Yorkshire we felt keenly on the subject, and in the *Leeds Mercury* I lost no opportunity of vindicating my friend from the attacks which a section of the advanced Radicals, who claimed Mr. Chamberlain as their leader, made upon him. The result was to bring about a strained state of the relations between myself and the official leaders of the Liberal party. Leeds had given the Government its most signal victory in the General Election of 1880. It was felt in the Cabinet to be a serious thing that the *Leeds Mercury*, and with it no inconsiderable section of the Liberal electors, regarded Mr. Forster's supersession with indignation, and by some influential member of the Government a proposal was made to crush the *Mercury*, and prove that it did not really represent Liberal opinion in Leeds, by convening a meeting of the Liberal Association for the purpose of expressing confidence in the Irish policy of the Ministry. It was an absurd device, and it failed, as it deserved to do. Although we were very angry at the treatment which Mr. Forster had received, we were perfectly loyal to Liberal principles and to the leadership of Mr. Gladstone. There was no need, therefore, to ask us to testify to our confidence in Ministers. But the men who had succeeded in driving Mr. Forster from office desired to complete their work by bringing his defenders into open contempt, and they thought that they would accomplish this by means of a

meeting of Liberal electors in Leeds which should prove to the world that the editor of the *Leeds Mercury* represented nobody but himself in his championship of Forster's cause.

They put pressure upon the Association to summon a meeting, which was duly held. It turned out to be a demonstration in favour of Forster rather than the Government, and the attempt to crush independence of opinion in the Liberal ranks was thus signally foiled. I do not know who the member of the Cabinet was who was responsible for this manœuvre, but whoever he may have been—and I have my suspicions upon that point—he had little reason to congratulate himself upon the result of his strategy. For a time the incident caused a certain degree of coldness between myself and my Liberal friends on the executive of the Liberal Association. Sir James Kitson and I had worked together so harmoniously in raising up a united party in Leeds that this partial breach between us was rather painful. Happily it did not last long. I stood to my own opinions, and for the future our local Liberal leaders were content that, whilst supporting them in every matter upon which I was in agreement with them, I should not be attacked for maintaining my absolute independence on those questions on which I took a line of my own. No further attempts were made, I need scarcely add, to intimidate the *Mercury* by means of public meetings in Leeds, nor do I think I suffered in the long run in the estimation of friends from whom I then differed, by the steps I took to vindicate my character, both as a responsible journalist and as an independent critic of public affairs.

Naturally I was drawn closer to Forster by the fact that I was thus constituted his representative and champion in the Press, and I became a somewhat frequent visitor at his delightful but unpretentious residence on the banks of the Wharfe at Burley. It was on my first visit to him after his resignation that an incident took place which touched me deeply. I was sitting with his and my old friend, Canon Jackson, of Leeds, in the library after breakfast. Forster, of whose blunt manner I have already spoken, came into the room. For some time he walked up and down without speaking, and was apparently somewhat troubled. Suddenly he turned to Jackson and asked him if he would go out of the room. When the Canon had gone Forster closed the door behind him, took another turn up and down the apartment, and then, speaking with evident difficulty, said to me, "I cannot let you leave this house without letting you know what I feel with regard to all that you have done for me. When nobody else dared to say a word in my favour in public during that terrible time in Ireland, you were always ready to defend me from attack. I needed defending, Heaven knows! My colleagues left me absolutely alone; they left me to take my own way, just as if I had been the Czar of Russia. I was attacked, as you know, both in England and Ireland, by the papers and public men of all parties. I knew I had very powerful enemies who were determined to make the worst of everything I did, and none of my own colleagues defended me. You can never know what a comfort it was to me at that time to know that I had one staunch friend in the Press, and that the dear old *Leeds Mercury* would always judge me fairly

and try to make the public see the truth. God bless you!"

I do not know whether he or I was the more deeply moved by this sudden and most unexpected outburst of feeling from a man who, as a rule, stubbornly concealed the sensitiveness of his nature and the warmth of his heart under a rugged and at times almost forbidding exterior. I do not pretend to have deserved what he said, but the words he uttered sank into my heart, never to be forgotten. Henceforth the censures of a caucus and the sneers of those superior critics who derided me as the victim of an absurd prejudice in favour of a statesman who had fallen, were as less than nothing to me.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST LIBERAL IMPERIALIST.

Forster a Pioneer of Liberal Imperialism—His Political Courage—His Unfortunate Manner—His Home Life—Intrigues in the Cabinet—The Plots against Forster's Life—Reaction in his Favour—Forster and Lord Hartington—The Former's Grief for Gordon—Forster and Lord Rosebery—Mr. Stead and the *Pall Mall Gazette*—His Responsibility for the Gordon Imbroglio.

I SHOULD like to dwell upon my visits to Forster at his own home at Wharfeside, and to describe the frank, wholesome talk which I had there on many different occasions with the master of the house; but the talk was private, I made no notes of it at the time, and it is better that I should make no attempt to recall it now. This, however, I will say, in justice to Forster himself. During all my intercourse with him I never heard him utter a harsh word or give expression to an unworthy sentiment. No public man of his day was more cruelly misunderstood by his contemporaries. It had become a sort of tradition among the followers of Mr. Chamberlain, and among others who ought to have known better, that Forster was not even a genuine Liberal. He was supposed to be a trimmer and a time-server, and all manner of ignoble jealousies were attributed to him. I know, not only from many repeated conversations with him, but from acts of his which never reached the public, how deep and genuine was his faith in Liberal principles, how exalted and far-extended his belief in the

application and development of those principles. He was the first man of eminence to attempt to bring home to the mind of the nation the greatness of its Imperial duties and responsibilities. It was he who, in the days when he was a discarded Minister, sowed the seed which is now bringing forth fruit in the shape of that unity of the Empire for which others, who came but yesterday into the field, are, with a great flourish of trumpets, claiming the credit.

The man who was scornfully described as "the great trimmer" was the most absolutely fearless man in political life I have ever known. I remember his coming to me when the question of extending Household Suffrage to the residents in the counties was first being broached in Parliament. He told me that he meant to move a resolution extending the measure to Ireland. No other statesman of importance had at that time suggested such a step, whilst Lord Hartington had openly denounced it. I implored him to leave such a measure, which was certain to be unpopular with that section of the party which had been most favourable to him, to somebody else. "You have suffered enough already for Ireland," I said. "Let somebody else knock his head against this stone wall." "Who else will do it?" he replied. "The thing is right, and it must be done. As for your stone wall, I have never been afraid of being the first man over a fence." Trimmer, indeed! As for his alleged jealousy of the men who were treading on his heels, I can only say that I never heard a syllable from his lips which gave countenance to this charge against him. Always frank and outspoken, he was at the same time invariably generous in his judgments upon his colleagues and his rivals.

Rancour he never cherished, and he could forgive those who had injured him far more freely than most men I have known.

I have spoken of his manner. This was, I think, his great misfortune. Again and again he offended men who were brought into contact with him by his bluntness of speech, and by his disregard of the mere niceties of deportment. I have heard him denounced as " a heartless ruffian " by someone who had suffered from an apparent lack of courtesy on his part. All the time Forster was absolutely unconscious of having given offence, and when his attention was called to the fact that he had wounded someone by his manner, he was filled with distress. One day an eminent publicist who had cruelly misjudged and misrepresented Forster came to me in the Reform Club and asked if I had ever stayed at Wharfeside. I replied in the affirmative. " Then," said my friend, " you can perhaps tell me if what I hear is true. I am told that, rude and bearish as he is to people who meet him casually, it is nothing in comparison with his brutality in his own house, and especially to his wife." Angry as I was at this charge against my friend, I could not refrain from bursting into a roar of laughter at its absurdity. No woman that ever lived was treated with a more tender and chivalrous affection and reverence than that which Mrs. Forster received from her husband. That she was eminently worthy of being worshipped by the man whose name she bore, all who knew her must admit. She had inherited great intellectual qualities from her father, Dr. Arnold, of Rugby. She shared the delicate critical spirit of her brother Matthew; and, above all, she was a delightful woman, gentle,

refined, full of love for those of her own household, but full also of interest in, and sympathy with, all other men and women. Upon her Forster lavished the love of his whole heart, and to her judgment he deferred more constantly than to that of any other person. It always seemed to me that their marriage was an ideal union, both of brain and heart. When I was writing his biography, I felt it necessary to say something about the peculiarities of his manner. Mrs. Forster objected to what I said, not on the ground that it hurt her feelings to remember those peculiarities, but because, in her opinion, they had never existed. "I do not understand what you mean by the peculiarities of his manner," she said to me one day. "His manner was always delightful, especially to women." This was the one point on which she was blind with regard to her husband. She did not see how great was the tribute paid to his sterling qualities by the fact that so many men loved him and honoured him in spite of his rough exterior. Often when I was with him I thought of Browning's line, "Do roses stick like burrs?" It was his very angularities that seemed to make Forster's friends cling to him so closely.

In the years which followed his retirement from office he remained a thorough-going Liberal, but he claimed for himself the right of independent judgment as a member of his own party. The Ministry never got over the blow it received when he resigned. On the day of his resignation, when he left the Cabinet, Lord Selborne, who sympathised altogether with him, rose directly after he did, and said, "If Forster goes, I must go too." He was actually on his way to the door

when someone—I believe Sir William Harcourt —following him threw his arms round him, and forcibly detained him till he was brought to a more docile state of mind.

That, however, was, as everybody knows, a Cabinet of many resignations. It was said, when it at last came to an end, that there was no man in it who had not resigned once at least, and that one or two had resigned many times. The fact is that the disruption of the old Liberal party had already begun. The new wine provided by Chamberlain and Company fermented in the old bottles. Nobody felt very happy in the presence of the member for Birmingham. He was the reverse of conciliatory, and seemed anxious to let everybody know that he recognised no superior. This would not have mattered so much if his conduct had been more consistent with the traditions of Cabinets. Sir William Harcourt was not unversed in intrigue, and one wonders now how a Cabinet which contained those two men held together as long as it did. It was the leakiest Cabinet, so far as its secrets were concerned, that I have known. It is amusing now to recall the fact that at that time an innocent public, which still regarded Mr. Chamberlain as a man with more self-assertion than intellect or force of character, pictured him to itself as the tool of Mr. Morley. It was Mr. Morley, we were told, who found the policy and the brains, and Mr. Chamberlain was but the instrument of his will. This is not the only point upon which the public fell into error, but it is one that deserves to be noted.

The ugly wrench which was given to the Ministry by Forster's retirement and the Phœnix Park

tragedy that immediately followed it, was aggravated by the revelations at the trial of the murderers of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke. Whilst Mr. Forster was still Chief Secretary it was vaguely known that he had been the object of murderous conspiracies. The *Pall Mall Gazette* had sneered at the rumours of plots against his life, and had pleasantly hinted that they were all a myth, concocted by Forster's friends in his interests. When James Carey, the infamous ringleader of the assassins, told his dreadful story in the witness-box in order to save his neck, the truth was made known, and the world learned that for months Forster, whilst meeting slander and hostile criticism in England, had been in constant danger of murder in Ireland. I have told elsewhere the story of his last week in Dublin, and of the daily attempts that were made by Carey and his confederates to compass his death. Some of my readers may remember how at the last he only escaped the knives of the assassins by something like a miracle. He was leaving Dublin for the last time, though he himself was not aware of the fact, and he had arranged to go from Westland Row Station by a certain train in order to catch the night boat for Holyhead. In the afternoon his work at the Castle was got through rather sooner than had been expected, and his private secretary, Mr. Jephson, suggested to him that instead of waiting for the train they should drive together to Kingstown, and dine at the club there. The inducement held out to Forster was that in this way he would have time for a game of whist before going on board the steamer. He fell in with Jephson's suggestion,

and thus escaped from Ireland safely. That very night the whole gang of Invincibles, as the murderers had called themselves, had assembled at Westland Row for the purpose of killing him. Thrice they searched the train, vainly looking for the man whose death-sentence they had pronounced. Mrs. Forster was in one of the carriages, but her husband was not there. "If he had been," said Carey, in telling the story, "he would not have been alive now."

When the truth became known, and it was seen that there was nothing of the mythical in the conspiracy against Forster's life, public indignation flamed up afresh at the treatment he had received. When he next came to Leeds, after the trial of the Invincibles, a crowd followed him through the streets from the railway station to the *Mercury* office, cheering loudly. No wonder that a Government which had to confront the feeling caused by the treatment meted out to Forster was neither very happy nor very strong. It was soon after the exposure of the Invincibles that Forster addressed his constituents in St. George's Hall, Bradford. A number of Irishmen had got into the gallery, and persistently interrupted him, so that at last his speech was brought to a standstill. Gathering himself together, he waited for a moment's silence, and then, with outstretched arm menacing his antagonists, cried, in a voice which rang through the hall, "Since you didn't kill me in Ireland, you've got to listen to me here!" The shout that went up from the meeting as a whole acclaimed this sentiment with such emphasis that the Irishmen were reduced to silence, and there was no more trouble. Some

persons were, however, very much shocked by Forster's characteristic bluntness. Among these was Mr. Gladstone, who thought that his former colleague had shown very bad taste.

Egypt and Gordon were the topics which I chiefly discussed with Forster during our years of intimacy after 1882. The fate of Gordon, in particular, excited in him a degree of emotion of which few would have thought him capable. More than once I have seen the tears in his eyes when he was speaking of Gordon, surrounded by his savage foes in his desert capital. The Ministry, as everybody knows, was floundering in those days. Even those of us who were the warm friends and admirers of Mr. Gladstone were troubled and perplexed. Some of us knew, indeed, that Mr. Gladstone was not the only, nor the chief, sinner in the matter of Gordon ; but he was the scapegoat behind whom those who had a greater responsibility for the mismanagement of the Soudan business were only too glad to hide themselves. Forster was filled with indignation and contempt by the confused utterances of the Ministry, and by Mr. Gladstone's elaborate attempts to prove that though General Gordon was " hemmed in " he was not surrounded. Poor Mr. Gladstone ! It was sad indeed that he should have to undertake this thankless task, and should be compelled to make out a case for a Cabinet which had practically got out of hand. It was in connection with one of his apologies for the Ministry that Mr. Forster charged him with being able to persuade most people of almost anything, and himself of everything. This chance phrase, used in the heat of debate, was treated by Lord Hartington as being a direct imputation upon Mr.

Gladstone's sincerity, and Forster was lectured and denounced in terms which made the breach between himself and his old colleagues wider than ever. There was no truth in the charge made against him. He always had, and always expressed, a profound admiration for Gladstone's character, and he had never for a moment doubted his honesty. He felt the violent invective of Lord Hartington keenly. When he met the latter in the lobby on the same evening, he said to him, "You were very unfair to me to-night, and you knew it, but you had such a d——d bad case that I forgive you."

Again and again, in those days, Forster would come over to Leeds to see me, to talk about Gordon, or he would ask me to his own house in order to discuss the same topic. The fascination which it had for him was extraordinary. If Gordon had been his own brother he could not have been more deeply interested in his fate. When at last the end of the long tragedy came, and the news reached England of the failure of the expedition to Khartoum, and Gordon's death, Forster was affected by it in the keenest manner. He could hardly speak when he came to me to discuss the fatal tidings, and he was full of theories as to the possibility of Gordon having escaped, after all, from his enemies. Apparently he could not bring himself to accept the truth. It was strange to see this great, powerful man, who had passed through so many years of fierce conflict on his own account, broken down by sorrow for one of whom he had comparatively little personal knowledge, but whose character and fate appealed to all that was best and truest in his nature. Looking back upon my years

of friendship with Forster, there are no incidents that touch my sympathies more keenly than those which relate to his heartfelt grief for Gordon, the great victim of ministerial muddling and administrative incapacity.

Everybody knows that Forster was the reverse of a Little Englander. In the days when Mr. Chamberlain was still the parochial politician, and the Manchester School a power in the land, Forster never lost an opportunity of trying to inspire his fellow-countrymen with the sense of the greatness of their Imperial position, and of the duties which it imposed upon them. As founder of the Imperial Federation League, he put himself at the head of those English statesmen whose names will be identified with the union of Great Britain and her Colonies in the Empire which we know to-day. He got very little help from the leading politicians on either side. Mr. Chamberlain, who now talks as though the foundation-stone of the Empire was laid in the suburbs of Birmingham, gave him no aid at all, nor did the active spirits of the Opposition. It seemed as though most of his old colleagues and opponents regarded Forster's strenuous advocacy of Imperial Federation as an attempt on his part to keep his name before the public eye. There was one rising young politician, however, who took a different view of Forster's action, and who not only sympathised with his motives, but threw himself into the cause of which he was the leader. This was Lord Rosebery, and to him and to Forster belongs the lion's share of the credit for the creation and development of that sense of Imperial unity which is to-day so great a factor in the life of the Empire.

At that time Forster's friends had no suspicion that his public career was drawing to a close. He was many years younger than Mr. Gladstone, was full of vigour and of an enthusiasm that was almost youthful in its exuberance, and he seemed to have a long life of work before him. But a trivial incident revealed to me the fact that things were not as they seemed, and that this great sturdy Englishman was by no means in the state of health that men supposed. When walking in Switzerland, he had accidentally injured the nail of his great toe, and it was necessary to remove it. Forster regarded the operation as a slight one, and was anxious that cocaine should be used as an anæsthetic, so that he might, as he said to me, "have the fun" of witnessing the actual operation. When the time came, however, it was found to be a much more serious matter than Forster had supposed. The operation was performed under chloroform by an eminent surgeon, and this gentleman told me after the operation that he had discovered that Forster's health was in a very unsatisfactory condition. Indeed, this little accident was the beginning of the end, though few at the time suspected the fact.

Before closing this chapter, I may make some further reference to my friend Mr. Stead. The retirement of John Morley from the *Pall Mall Gazette* had led to Mr. Stead's promotion, and he had become the virtual, if not the nominal editor of the paper. He was not long in impressing the public with the fact that a new and original force had entered English public life. "I am riding on the crest of the wave," he wrote to me one day, and such was indeed the

fact. The influence of the paper which he controlled became for a time almost paramount, and Mr. Stead revelled in his power with all the zest of a schoolboy who has suddenly been called to sit on the throne of an autocrat. He calmly undertook the direction of the foreign policy of Great Britain, and ordered Ministers to do his bidding with an audacity which would have been absurd but for the fact that Ministers seemed ready to take him at his word. He it was who first advised them to the evil course of sending Gordon to Khartoum. "Sarawak the Soudan" was the cry he raised, his proposal being that Gordon should be sent to found an empire of his own on the upper Nile. Ministers yielded to his vehemence, and Gordon was sent to Khartoum, with what results everybody knows. Mr. Stead had the courage of his opinions, and he was not in the least disconcerted when he found that his advice had involved the country in the tragical and disastrous expedition for Gordon's relief. Talking to me one day at that time, he said, "John Morley told me yesterday that I ought not to be able to sleep in my bed at nights for thinking of all the men who have lost their lives over this business." If at any time in my life I had been inclined to believe in government by newspapers, I should certainly have been cured of that delusion after seeing what a mess even so brilliant a journalist as Stead made of the attempt to control the policy of a nation from an editor's desk.

CHAPTER XVI.

NOVELS AND NOVELISTS.

"The Lumley Entail"—"Gladys Fane"—My Experience in Novel-Writing—About Sad Endings—Imaginary Characters and Characters Drawn from Life—Visits from William Black and Bret Harte—Black as an After-Dinner Speaker—How Bret Harte saw Haworth Parsonage, and was Roughly Entreated by a Yorkshire Admirer—A Candid Opinion on the Brontë Monograph.

I NOW propose to hark back a little in order to bring together some reminiscences and experiences that lie apart from the graver political events with which I have been dealing. To begin with, I made a serious attempt at novel-writing in 1883. Perhaps my friendship with William Black and James Payn had some influence in leading me to revert to a kind of work which in my youth had attracted me greatly. I had already, as I have said, written one novel, "The Lumley Entail," published in the *St. James's Magazine*, and long since forgotten by everybody, including its author. I had begun half-a-dozen different stories at various times, but had always failed to make much progress with them. One or two short stories that had appeared in Christmas Numbers of the *Leeds Mercury* and sundry magazines had not been wholly unsuccessful, and so, after long cogitation, in the year 1883 I wrote "Gladys Fane: A Story of Two Lives." Of its merits I cannot speak, but it gave me great pleasure to write it, and it had a friendly reception both from the critics and the public. In this

country it had a very large sale, and in the United States a still larger. The strange thing is that here the book still sells, and once a year I receive from the publisher, Mr. Fisher Unwin, a modest sum in payment of the royalties due to me on the sales.

Perhaps I may say something on the strength of my limited experience on the subject of novel-writing. It may seem presumptuous to do so, seeing that everybody nowadays either writes a novel or thinks that he or she can do so. My own experience taught me that in novel-writing, as in most descriptions of work, there is a particular knack to be acquired before success can be attained. I think I must have been absolutely without this knack when I began to write "Gladys Fane." I was a good descriptive writer, and could describe either scenery or action sufficiently well, but when I tried my hand at conversation I was utterly at sea. I could not make my men and women talk as men and women do in real life. Before I had finished the story I had got the knack, and if I were ever to write another I have no doubt that I could manage the conversation fairly well. Of course, even without the knack a writer may achieve, under certain conditions, a great success; but to do so he must *feel* his story; that is to say, it must be as real to him as if it were something that had actually happened. Undoubtedly I had this feeling about "Gladys Fane," and this, I imagine, was the one merit which secured for the book the degree of success that it attained. I remember that when I wrote the closing chapter, in which the hero meets with a tragical death, I was under the influence of as poignant an emotion as I should have

experienced if I had been standing by the death-bed of my dearest friend. Great was my joy, after the story was published, to read a generous review of the book in the *Standard*, in which the reviewer said that he did not envy the man who could read that last chapter with a steady voice and an undimmed eye. I saw that others had been infected by the emotion which almost overwhelmed me as I penned the closing pages of the book.

The sad ending which is so hateful to the ordinary reader is regarded by some reviewers as a cheap device for enlisting popular attention, and many complaints have been made of its having been used unnecessarily. There may be some writers who deliberately make up their minds to bring their stories to a tragical conclusion, but if such persons exist they must be very bad artists. In my own case I certainly did not contemplate a sad ending when I began to write my novel; but week by week, as I wrote, I became more and more forcibly impressed with the feeling that the doom of my hero was sealed. I tried to get away from this morbid conclusion, and to wrench the story into another channel, but I failed utterly in the attempt, so that at last I had to yield, though, as I have said, I did so with keen regret. William Black, when discussing with me one day the question of the sad ending, said, "People may say what they like, but I know, as a matter of experience, that a book which ends sorrowfully is always remembered far more vividly than one that winds up in the usual fashion with the ringing of marriage-bells." This is quite true, but the young novelist who wants his novels to sell, ought carefully to avoid the tragical *dénouement*,

for there are a great many readers who deliberately refuse to read any book which ends sadly. Therefore, though art may require such an ending, from the commercial side of literature it is a huge mistake. Mr. Forster came to me at the time when "Gladys Fane" was in the flush of its first success, and told me with his usual kindly bluntness that he was not going to read it. "My wife has read it, and likes it, but I am not going to make myself miserable by reading any story that ends sadly. You must write another that I *can* read." And it was this chance remark that led to my next essay in fiction, of which more hereafter.

I had one curious experience in writing "Gladys Fane" that may or may not be common to most novelists. Certain of the characters were founded upon real men and women. I painted no portraits, of course, but I undoubtedly took hints from people whom I knew. My heroine, for example, had a prototype in real life, who served for the first sketch, but as I wrote I made her character develop until she was a wholly different woman from her model. Black, criticising the story in a letter, remarked that the further the heroine was removed from all likeness to the original, the more natural and real she became. But still more striking was the fact that most of my critics agreed that the most real characters in the book, those that struck them as being most lifelike and individual, were purely imaginary creations of my own. "I like your villain," wrote Lord Houghton. "He is the most impressive figure in the book. Wherever did you meet him?" As a matter of fact, I had met him nowhere, and could not charge

myself with having taken even a hint in drawing his portrait from anybody whom I knew or had heard of. Some of the minor characters were unhesitatingly described by critics as portraits evidently drawn from life. In no single instance had they been so drawn. I had imagined them simply. It would be interesting to know if this is the experience of other writers of romance. I am bound to speak with modesty and diffidence, because of my very limited experience in this kind of work. I have only touched upon the subject, indeed, because I think it may interest my readers to know something of the secrets of the workshop of even the humblest literary artist.

There is just one other point that I may mention in connection with "Gladys Fane." Whilst I was writing the book, I was doing my full work as editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, and was not only editing the paper, but was writing for it an average of twelve columns a week. "Gladys Fane" is a long story, containing a hundred and sixty thousand words. I wrote it during my scanty leisure in exactly sixteen weeks, or at the rate of ten thousand words a week. This, I imagine, is a speed which only the unfaltering pen of the typical lady novelist usually attains. Before beginning any chapter which had not shaped itself clearly in my mind, I used to take a long country walk, during the course of which I found that I could beat out the whole narrative, and solve any small problem in the construction that had troubled me.

About this time I was seeing a good deal of my literary friends. Amongst others, William Black and Bret Harte visited me at Leeds, and I have amusing recollections of both visits. Black

came to me, if I remember aright, on his way to Scotland. It was his first visit to Leeds, and I thought he was entitled to something more than the welcome given to a private guest. Not many writers of distinction had found their way to Leeds whilst I was living there, and it was my earnest desire that those who came should receive a greeting that would satisfy them that even business communities could value real worth in literature. Accordingly, I gave a large dinner party at the Liberal Club in Black's honour, and invited to it a number of the leading citizens. They were all anxious to come, and to share in the welcome to my distinguished guest. Unfortunately, however, the dinner involved a speech from Black. I knew how much he hated speech-making, and did my best to steel him for the ordeal. But no efforts of mine, or of any other man, would have converted Black into an orator. His response to the toast of his health, which had been drunk with genuine enthusiasm, was as follows: "When I left London, I thought I was going to Yorkshire, but the way in which you have treated me shows that I have made a mistake and that I have really got into Scotland." And forthwith he sat down, leaving us to realise the subtle compliment conveyed in his brief speech.

And here I am reminded of another occasion on which I heard him make an attempt at after-dinner oratory. A certain Lord Mayor of London distinguished himself by giving a dinner to the representatives of literature. I had the honour of being invited to the feast, and shared Black's cab in the drive to the Mansion House. On the way thither he told me that he was one of

those who had to respond for fiction: "but," he added, "I am all right, for Blackmore is to speak before me, and I shall get up when he sits down, and simply say 'I say ditto to Mr. Blackmore.'" Comforted with this idea, he was able to enjoy the Lord Mayor's turtle. But alas! when Blackmore rose to address the company, he confined himself to the statement that, never having made a speech before, he must leave it to a much more distinguished man, his friend Mr. William Black, to respond to the toast. It was obvious to Black that he could not say ditto to this speech, and he had, accordingly, to make a serious attempt to reply for fiction.

I confess I was very sorry for him. He started well by telling a story about an experience of his when visiting the United States. He was entertained at dinner by some New York club, not, I imagine, a literary one, and the president proposed his health in gushing terms, the peroration of the speech being, "I now ask you, gentlemen, to drink to the health of the greatest of living novelists, Mr. William Black, the author of that immortal work, 'Lorna Doone.'" Now this is an excellent story, and if Black had only been able to tell it, he would have delighted his audience, and would have secured a very genuine triumph. But alas! the acoustic properties of the Egyptian Hall are, to say the least of it, not good, and Black was so nervous that he was almost inaudible, more especially when he reached the point of his little tale. The result was that to the vast majority of those who heard him, his speech seemed to be a simple announcement of the fact that he had once been described at a dinner in New York as

the greatest of living novelists. Happily, Black was not dependent upon his oratorical gifts for his power of influencing the public.

When Bret Harte visited me at Leeds in the early 'eighties, his arrival caused what the reporters describe as a "sensation" in the town. To begin with, Harte had not been long resident in this country, and the author of "The Heathen Chinee" was still something of a mythical personage to the average Englishman. Then he still affected the style of dress which Buffalo Bill afterwards made familiar, and with his broad sombrero hat, his flowing locks, and ample fur-lined overcoat, cut a conspicuous figure in the streets. It is no exaggeration to say that everybody turned to look at him, and that more than once he had a small mob at his heels. Greatly interested, like most of his fellow-countrymen, in the story of the Brontës, he got me to accompany him on a pilgrimage to Haworth, to see the world-famed parsonage and church. Shortly before this time, I had been concerned in raising an agitation against the destruction of the church, and had, in consequence, incurred the hostility of the incumbent, a certain Mr. Wade, who was anxious to replace the venerable fabric in which the Brontës had worshipped for so many years by a handsome modern edifice. Mr. Shepard, the American Consul at Bradford, was the companion of Harte and myself in our visit; but somewhat to our annoyance, we were joined at a wayside station by a young man, who was known to Shepard, and who seemed very anxious to accompany a celebrity like Bret Harte. We duly reached the grey old village among the moors, and for

the last time I saw the quaint interior of Haworth Church, and sat once more in Charlotte Brontë's seat in the old-fashioned pew at the foot of the clumsy three-decker pulpit.

When we had seen the church, and inspected the signature of Charlotte Brontë in the register of marriages, Harte declared that he could not leave without visiting the parsonage. I warned him that he was not likely to be admitted, as Mr. Wade was known to object to the intrusion of strangers into his house. Harte, however, maintained that as an American author, Mr. Wade would certainly not refuse him if he sought admittance, and persisted in visiting the parsonage. Remembering my controversy with Mr. Wade, I discreetly withdrew from the company, and retired to the Black Bull Inn, where I smoked a cigar in the chair in which Branwell Brontë had too often sat. After some time had elapsed, my friends—Harte, Shepard, and the young man, whom I will call M. — returned. "Did you really get admittance?" I asked, and Harte replied in the affirmative. "Well," I said. "you may congratulate yourself, for it was a remarkable achievement."

Harte did not seem to respond very willingly to this remark, so Shepard took up the tale, and told me what had really happened. "When we got to the door, Harte sent in his card to Mr. Wade, and enquired if he could see him. We were left standing on the doorstep until Mr. Wade made his appearance, Harte's card in his hand. The expression of his face was not encouraging. He asked what we wanted, and Harte said, 'You perhaps may know my name.

I am an American author.' Mr. Wade looked at the card, and said, 'Yes, he had heard the name. What did Mr. Harte want?' Then Harte introduced me, as American Consul at Bradford, and explained that we were both most anxious to be allowed to see the interior of Charlotte Brontë's old home. Upon this Mr. Wade, in very plain language, declared that it was impossible, that he made it a rule not to admit strangers to his house, and could make no exception. Harte seemed very much annoyed, and I put in a word to explain who his visitor was, and what he had done in literature. But the old gentleman was quite obdurate, and we were about to turn away when young M. stepped forward, and said, 'Mr. Wade, my name is M. and I come from So-and-so.' 'What!' said Mr. Wade, his whole manner changing at once, 'are you related to my old friend, Mr. M., of the firm of M. & N.?' 'I am his son,' replied M. 'Come in, sir,' cried Mr. Wade, with effusion. 'I shall be delighted to see you in my house, and you may bring your friends with you.'" And this was the fashion in which Bret Harte saw Haworth Parsonage.

I had, I confess, a kindlier feeling towards our youthful companion on the return journey than that which I had entertained towards him before this incident; but ere we reached Leeds he again annoyed me. Whilst we were waiting for our train in Keighley Station, M. disappeared from our side. Presently we became aware that he was going to and fro upon the platform telling everybody who Bret Harte was; so that in a short time we found ourselves surrounded by a staring crowd. Fortunately the train came up, and we were able

to escape; but a man known to M. entered the compartment, and the exuberant youth, in spite of the frowns of Shepard and myself, was unable to restrain himself. We heard him, in a stage whisper, announce that Bret Harte was there. Harte, who was boiling over with indignation, thrust his head out of the window to escape the stranger's stare. The latter ejaculated, "Bret Harte! Where?" M. pointed to the window, and instantly the sturdy Yorkshireman sprang from his seat, and seizing Harte by the shoulders, forced him back into his seat, whilst he thrust himself half out of the window, and eagerly searched the platform for the missing celebrity. "I can't see him nowhere," he ejaculated, as the train moved off, and he once more pushed Harte violently aside, as he strode back to his own seat. When at last, by expressive pantomime, M. had conveyed the truth to his friend's mind, it was difficult to decide whether Harte or the hero-worshipper betrayed the greater degree of embarrassment.

It was about this time that I had an amusing experience of my own in connection with Haworth and the Brontës. I was staying with my wife and children at a country inn at Burnsall, a delightful spot on the Upper Wharfe above Bolton Abbey. The inn was a small one, and by arrangement with the landlord I had, in addition to a sitting-room, the exclusive use of the coffee-room when my family partook of meals. The truth was that the "Red Lion" had but few visitors, at any rate of the coffee-room class. Coming down to breakfast one morning, the landlord met me with a perturbed countenance. "There's a young gentleman from London in the coffee-room, sir," he said, "and

though I've told him the room is engaged, he won't go out, but insists upon having his breakfast there." I assured the landlord that I did not in the least object to his doing so, and accordingly the young man breakfasted at the same table as myself and my family. I found he was an entire stranger to the district, and he volunteered the statement that he had never been in Yorkshire before his present visit. An enthusiast upon Yorkshire scenery, I was anxious to know what he had seen of the beautiful broad shire. "I've been nowhere," he replied, "except to a little place called Haworth."

Now what attraction could there be in such a place as Haworth for a stranger from London unless it were the attraction of the Brontës? So I reasoned; and reasoned, as it appeared, most erroneously. "Oh, no," he said, in reply to my question, "I didn't go to Haworth because of the Brontës. In fact, I knew nothing about them when I went there, but my friends gave me a book to read about them, and I tried to read it. It was written by somebody called Wemyss Reid, but I thought it a poor book." I knew that my friend the landlord was quite certain to tell the stranger my name, and I thought it better to take the bull by the horns, and reveal the truth to him. So, as gently as I could, and with a keen appreciation of the good story with which I saw that he had furnished me, I made him understand that I was the culprit who had produced that poor book. He took the revelation so much to heart that I really regretted having made it, and it was not until after more than an hour's talk on irrelevant topics that I eased him, as I hope,

of his pain and mortification, and induced him to join me in laughing at the extraordinary stroke of ill-fortune by which I was the first person to whom he innocently revealed his bad opinion of my book. Perhaps the incident taught him to be more cautious ever afterwards in the expression of his literary verdicts, at all events when in the company of a chance acquaintance. It must be confessed that in this case the doctrine of co-incidences upon which I have touched in a former chapter was not so pleasant in its application as it usually is. For my part, I have always recalled that breakfast with keen delight.

CHAPTER XVII.

TO THE DEFEAT OF THE GOVERNMENT (1885).

More Antagonism towards Forster—A Household Suffrage Demonstration at Leeds—A Meeting at the Carlton Club and a Coincidence—Forster and "the most Powerful Man in Europe"—Single-Member Constituencies and the Cumulative Vote—Dynamite Outrages—Police Protection for Statesmen—I Receive Threatening Letters and Get a Fright—Death of Lord Houghton—Lord Derby and how he was Misunderstood—An Unconventional Dinner at Lord Houghton's—A Visit to Tangier—In Peril of the Sea—Gibraltar "a Magnificent Imposture"—Captain W. and the M.P.—To the North Cape—Cheering a Funeral Party—News of Mr. Gladstone's Overthrow—Home Again.

THE extension of Household Suffrage to the counties was the chief political topic of 1884. I have told how Forster was the first to announce his resolve to support a Household Suffrage Bill for Ireland. He was always an ardent reformer, and a genuine, as opposed to a sham, Radical. In the public agitation for the Bill Forster took a leading part, though he was still regarded with suspicion by many advanced Liberals. Sometimes these gentlemen treated him with distinct unfairness, because they could not forgive him his resolute antagonism to Mr. Chamberlain. In the autumn before the Bill passed we held a great Yorkshire demonstration in its favour on Woodhouse Moor, Leeds. John Morley had promised to attend as the principal speaker, and it was understood that the whole of the Liberal members for the West Riding would also be invited. I need hardly say that by far

the most eminent of these gentlemen was Mr. Forster. When the executive committee, of which I was a member, met to make arrangements for the demonstration, I found, to my intense indignation, that many members were opposed to the sending of an invitation to Mr. Forster! He was our nearest neighbour, for his house was only a few miles from Leeds; he was our most distinguished representative, and he was an ardent supporter of the Franchise Bill. Yet not even these facts could serve him in the eyes of men who regarded Mr. Chamberlain as being, next to Mr. Gladstone, the heaven-born leader of English Liberalism. I hotly contested the proposal to exclude Forster from the gathering, and succeeded in carrying my point, though I could only do so by agreeing that instead of a special invitation, such as we sent to all other men in his position, he should receive nothing but the ordinary printed circular sent wholesale to the known Liberals of the district. Forster, who cared nothing about forms and ceremonies, wrote promptly declaring his intention to be present.

The meeting was to be addressed from three platforms, at each of which was a principal speaker. To John Morley, as a stranger, we assigned the leading position on the middle platform. Herbert Gladstone took a similar post on one of the side platforms, and on the third Forster was to be the chief speaker. To my great amazement, a couple of days before the meeting, we received word from Mr. Morley that under the new arrangements he did not think it desirable to attend. It was the first evidence I had received of what I now know to be one of the peculiarities

in the character of this eminent and gifted man. The new arrangement which led to his wishing to withdraw from the meeting seemed to be the announcement that Forster was to be one of the speakers. I saw at once that if Morley did not come it would not only lessen the effect of the meeting, but would lead to a fresh outbreak of what I may call the Forster dissensions in the party. This was a disaster at all hazards to be prevented, and accordingly I took what most of my readers, I imagine, will consider not only strong but somewhat presumptuous action. I telegraphed to Morley, warning him that if he maintained his determination to stay away, the reason for his absence would undoubtedly become public property, and his "laudable ambition" would not be aided by the revelation of the truth. A strong measure, indeed; and I am prepared for the censure of my critics; but I succeeded in my purpose. Morley promised to come, and contented himself with writing a letter to me in which he disclaimed the imputation that he carried about with him any of that "perilous explosive" called ambition. The meeting was a great success; all the chief speakers were well received, but I confess I was not altogether grieved when I saw that the greatest crowd was that which gathered round platform number three, and that the loudest cheers of the vast multitude were those given to Forster.

It will be remembered that the Tories offered a stubborn opposition to the passing of the Household Suffrage Bill, and it was only carried in the end in a winter session, specially convened for that purpose. According to popular rumour at the time, it was eventually passed as the result of

compromise between Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury. I do not believe that there is a word of truth in this story. Mr. Gladstone, at all events, stoutly denied that there had been any such compromise, and once wrote a long letter to me, maintaining this denial. But before the Tories could be induced to accept the Bill, a meeting of their party had to be held at the Carlton Club, and in connection with that meeting I have to tell a curious story of my own.

As most of my readers know, the Carlton Club and the Reform stand side by side in Pall Mall, only separated from each other by a narrow street which gives access to Carlton House Gardens. The windows of the smoking-room at the Reform Club face those of the large library of the Carlton, so that the members of the two clubs may, if they choose, see each other across the narrow roadway. The Conservative meeting was held in the big library of the club. Going into our own smoking-room on the afternoon of the meeting, I saw a well-known member of the club gazing intently across the way at the corresponding apartment in the Carlton. "If you come here," he said, turning to me, "you can see all the members of the Tory party gathering for their meeting." I saw no harm in accepting X.'s invitation, and joined him at the window. We picked out the various notables of the party. By-and-by an evil inspiration seized X. "Let us go upstairs to F.'s room," he said. "We shall see much better from there." I am ashamed to say that I yielded to the temptation, and accompanied X. to the room of a friend who occupied one of the club chambers facing the Carlton.

The window happened to be open, so that we had an unimpeded view of the meeting of the Tory party. We could not, of course, hear anything that was said, nor could we see the speakers, who were evidently placed with their backs to us between two of the windows; but we saw the audience, and were amused by the varying expression upon their faces as they listened to their leaders. X.'s insatiable curiosity led him to snatch up an opera-glass that was lying on F.'s dressing-table, and, despite my remonstrance, he took a long survey of the Tory gathering through this instrument. Suddenly I saw a man in the body of the meeting rise to his feet and point straight at our window. Instantly every face in the room flashed round, and I found myself under the concentrated gaze of some hundreds of manifestly indignant men. I seized the wretched X. by the collar and dragged him back from the window. "See what you have done with that abominable opera-glass of yours!" I cried; and then, to my shame and mortification, I saw the blinds pulled down at every window of the Carlton library, and I felt that by our foolish curiosity we had caused this gathering of political opponents to hold their conference in the dark. It is quite true that neither I nor X. had any ulterior motive in our observation of the meeting at the Carlton Club, but all the same I cannot pretend that the use of the opera-glass was not indefensible.

I was dining that evening at the Oxford and Cambridge Club with Mr. Andrew Lang. When I arrived there I was ushered into the club drawing-room, with the intimation that Mr. Lang would join me in a moment, and that I

would find another of his guests already in the room. I stepped to the fireplace, where this gentleman was standing, and my feelings may be imagined when I discovered that it was the very man who had pointed us out at the window of the Reform Club a few hours earlier. He was Mr. Charles Elton, then one of the members for Somersetshire. I saw that he did not recognise me, but the desire to confess my offending was irresistible. "You were at the meeting at the Carlton Club this afternoon, were you not?" I said to him. He looked at me rather curiously, before replying in the affirmative, and then added, "But you were not there?" "No," I said, "but did you observe anything curious at the Reform Club?" At once his face lighted up with angry intelligence. "Yes!" he said, "I did. There were a couple of scallywags"—it was the first time I had ever heard this modern term of reproach, and it is not surprising that I have nearly forgotten it — "watching us through opera-glasses from one of the windows, and signalling to a man whom they had put on the top of our club, and who was listening through the ventilator to the speeches." No words can express the sense of relief I felt when I heard this absurd statement. "No," I replied, "I assure you that you are mistaken. I am sorry to say that I was one of the scallywags who were looking out of the Reform Club, and I apologise sincerely for my untimely curiosity; but we had only one opera-glass between us, and we had nobody posted on the top of the Carlton Club to listen to the speeches. Upon that you may rely." Elton stared at me for a moment, and then burst into a roar of laughter, in which I joined him. It was

an immense relief to me to have got the burden off my soul; but I had received another proof of the frequency with which that long arm of coincidence asserts itself.

As a result of the passing of the Franchise Bill, and the creation of single-member constituencies which accompanied it, a Boundary Commission had to be appointed, to settle the boundaries of the new electoral divisions. In order to prevent gerrymandering it was agreed that this Commission should not only be quite independent of both parties, but that it should have absolute powers. Its chairman was Sir John Lambert, secretary of the Local Government Board; and his powers were, of course, very great. Forster, coming to see me one day, began to talk to me about the Boundary Commission, and the supreme powers vested in Sir John Lambert. Suddenly he burst into a chuckling laugh, and I knew that he had a story to tell me. "I was going up the stairs of the Local Government office to see Lambert the other day," he said, "and I met ——," mentioning the name of the former holder of a subordinate Government post, "coming down. 'Hullo, Forster!' he cried, 'what in the world are you doing here?" Well, I was just going to call on the most powerful man in England,' I replied. —— took off his hat and made me a low bow." "I hope you didn't undeceive him," I said. "Oh, yes, I did," replied Forster. "I told him that I didn't mean him, but Sir John Lambert." I wrung my hands over this fresh illustration of my friend's inability to set his sails in such a fashion as to catch the approval of others.

It was over this redistribution question that I

had the only difference of opinion I ever had with Forster. He was an ardent supporter of the single-member constituency, or *scrutin d'arrondissement*, as the French call it, in opposition to *scrutin de liste*. I, on the other hand, foresaw that the new system would break up the powerful political associations in our great towns, and thus destroy a political force which I believed to be of great value. I fought strenuously in the *Leeds Mercury* against what I styled the vivisection of the great boroughs; but I need not say that I fought in vain. I had many a good-humoured argument with Forster on the subject, but he would never admit that I was right, though after twenty years' experience and observation I am only now strengthened in my original opinion.

Before this time I had aroused Forster's anger —anger which never hurt—by the action I had taken, in common with some of my Liberal friends in Leeds, with regard to the School Board election. We found that the cumulative vote in a large constituency was almost unworkable. It had resulted in Leeds in the election, at the head of the poll on one occasion, of a mere demagogue of no account. In order to obviate any further misfortune of this kind my friend Mathers, the honorary secretary of the Liberal Association, devised a plan under which the town was divided by the Liberals into different divisions. To each of these divisions we allotted certain candidates, and we asked the electors who sympathised with us to vote only for the candidate allotted to the division in which they lived. The plan proved a brilliant success, for we carried all our candidates at that election,

and this method of getting over the difficulties of the cumulative vote was afterwards adopted in all large towns, including London. Forster was greatly wroth at the time, and told me that he looked upon the scheme as a dishonest attempt to evade an Act of Parliament.

Those were the years of the dynamite outrages. Certain desperate Irish societies, chiefly financed and recruited from the United States, were seeking to advance the Home Rule cause by terrorising the people of England. "Holy dynamite," as that powerful explosive was christened, was the weapon employed, and some very daring outrages were committed in London and other places. The most notable of these were the simultaneous attempts to wreck the House of Commons, Westminster Hall, and the Tower of London. These audacious crimes were committed on a Saturday afternoon. I spent the whole of the next morning reading and analysing the telegrams in which full details of the occurrences were given, and in writing an article for Monday's *Mercury* on the subject. In the afternoon I went over to Wakefield to keep an engagement I had made to dine and sleep at Thorns, the residence of my friends Mr. and Lady Catherine Milnes Gaskell. I well remember the scene when I entered the beautiful library at Thorns, about five o'clock. There was a large party there, including the Duke and Duchess of St. Albans, Mr. and Mrs. Goschen, and Mr. W. B. Beaumont, of Bretton.

When I was announced, Gaskell jumped up from his seat, saying, "Now we shall have news!" and instantly the whole party flocked round me, eager to know the truth as to the wild rumour which was all they had as yet heard of the devas-

tation wrought by the dynamiters in London on the previous day. My morning's work had, of course, qualified me to satisfy their curiosity, but the questions they poured in upon me were so numerous and so eager that I was at last obliged to ask them to sit down, and let me tell the story in my own fashion, which I accordingly proceeded to do amid the breathless attention of my auditors. The scene is worth recording as a characteristic incident of life in England in those days. We had an enemy, subtle, daring, and dangerous, actually waging war upon us within our own gates; and though the invincible courage of our race enabled us to pursue our own way in spite of the new terror that had arisen amongst us, we were none of us, as this scene in the library at Thorns proved, insensible to the horror of the situation, and the deadly character of the weapons used against us.

At this time all the leading members of the Liberal Government were under police protection, and Forster, as being the special object of Irish animosity, was also treated in this respect as though he were still a Minister. Some Ministers, it was asserted, not only enjoyed, but desired, the constant companionship of armed detectives, and amusing stories were told of the way in which they arrived at Mayfair dinner-parties accompanied by "stern-faced men" with revolvers in their pockets. I shall not repeat these stories, for I cannot bring myself to believe that any English statesman has been the victim of physical cowardice. Others, among whom Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Forster were conspicuous, loathed the presence of the police agents dogging their footsteps, and keeping watch

at their doors, and tried in every possible way to evade them. Mr. Gladstone, with the collar of his overcoat turned up to his ears, used suddenly to dash out of the garden door at the back of Downing Street, and attempt, by running across the parade at full speed, to get rid of his bodyguard. Occasionally he succeeded, but I am told that as a consequence he had so severe a wigging from the Home Secretary and the Chief Commissioner of Police that he was at last compelled to abandon his efforts to secure his unfettered liberty of action. Forster managed to obtain exemption from the obtrusive services of a bodyguard, but a policeman kept watch and ward by day and night in front of his house in Eccleston Square, not only to his disgust, but to that of one of his neighbours, who quitted his abode rather than continue to live near so dangerous a character. "I often wonder," said Forster to me one day, "what I shall do if I find an infernal machine on my doorstep when I come home some night. I know what it is my duty to do. I ought to take it up, and throw it into the middle of the square, but I am terribly afraid that I shan't have the pluck, and shall simply turn round and run away." Nobody who knew Forster could believe that he would ever have acted in any such fashion.

I had my own small experience at this time of trial. Threatening letters were flying about, and I received a fair share of them, for I was at that time very obnoxious to the Irish party in Leeds. One evening, on going down to my office, which I entered from a narrow thoroughfare called Bank Street, I was startled by being suddenly called upon to halt when near the office

door, whilst a policeman's lantern was flashed in my face. One of our workmen explained my identity to the officer, and I was allowed to pass. I then learned that the Leeds police had received information of a plot to blow up the *Mercury* office, and they had, accordingly, posted guards round the building. I was in the habit of driving home every night, or rather every morning, to my residence at Headingley, and the police suggested that I should be accompanied by an officer ; but I did not believe in my danger, and desired no such protection. In the depths of one winter's night, when a thaw was dissolving a heavy fall of snow, I had a great fright. I had left my cab, which had driven away, and was mounting the steps leading to the porch of my house, when I suddenly saw, lying on the half-melted snow against the door itself, a large bundle wrapped in sacking. I drew near it cautiously, and heard a curious ticking sound proceeding from it. "An infernal machine!" I exclaimed to myself, and I confess I was horribly frightened. The outer door of the porch was unlocked, and, opening it, I bounded inside, carefully avoiding the object which I suspected. I unlocked the inner door, and, entering the house, locked and barred it behind me.

Then, when I got into my dining-room, reason asserted itself, and I felt heartily ashamed of my panic. If the thing were an infernal machine, it would certainly do a great deal of damage if it exploded where it lay. I strung my nerves up to the sticking-point, went out, unlocked the door, seized the mysterious package in my hands, and flung it as far as I could into a little shrubbery in the garden. There was no explosion such as

I had expected. Nothing, indeed, happened; but when I got back to my dining-room, and saw my face in a mirror, I found it was as white as a sheet. The next morning I went out to look for the infernal machine. It was a coarse sack, filled with blocks of wood and sawdust, and I have a strong suspicion that it had been placed where I found it as a practical joke. The ticking which I had heard, and which had convinced me that I had to deal with an infernal machine, was evidently produced by the drip, drip of water from the bag on the step beneath it. Such were features in the lives of men more or less before the public eye in the years of the dynamite terror.

In the summer of 1885, along with many others, I met with a great loss. This was the death at Vichy of my dear old friend, Lord Houghton. No kinder friend than he man ever had. The world was inclined to laugh at his peculiarities, which lay upon the surface, and to ignore the sterling qualities that formed the basis of his character. If it is right to speak of a man as you find him, then I am entitled to say that there never lived a kinder or more generous man, or a truer friend, than Monckton Milnes. To me he was all this. I have told already the story of our first acquaintance in 1870, and of the debt which I very soon owed him. I could fill a volume with reminiscences of his talk, as I used to hear it during my frequent visits to Fryston, and of the warmth of his sympathy with one who had no claim upon him. I have made many friends in the course of my life, and looking back upon the list I am constrained to say that I have made more friends through the mediumship of Lord Houghton than through that of any other man.

Among those whom I first met at his house, I must not omit Edward, fourteenth Earl of Derby, better known in his time as the Lord Stanley who served as Foreign Secretary under the premiership of his brilliant father, the thirteenth Earl. Lord Derby—the man of whom I speak—was one of the great misunderstood figures of his generation. Men slandered him as freely as they slandered Mr. Gladstone, and, unlike the great Liberal leader, he did not possess that strong following of ardent adherents who stood by their chief, no matter how sternly Fortune might frown upon him. Lord Derby was one of the shyest of men, and, as a consequence, he was really known, even when he was in the thick of his political work, by only a few men and women. Those who did know him held him, however, in the highest esteem. There was no better judge of character than Lord Houghton, and often he would remark upon the fact that Lord Derby was almost as unpopular as his father had been the reverse. He cited this as a proof of the incapacity of the public for forming correct estimates of character. I had been in confidential correspondence with Lord Derby long before I first met him at Fryston, and in 1879 I wrote an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* dealing with his career at the Foreign Office, and with his reason for resigning his post in Lord Beaconsfield's Administration. This article was written on information which he supplied, and he himself corrected the proof-sheets. Yet these facts did not prevent some of the cocksure critics of the Press from announcing that I was wholly mistaken in my account of Lord Derby's action and motive. I have found, however, that nothing is so certain to meet with an absolute

contradiction in the Press as an indubitable fact which comes as a piece of unexpected news to the ordinary journalist.

When I met Lord Derby under Lord Houghton's roof he was far too shy to make any reference to our previous correspondence, yet when the first painful embarrassment had passed away, he proved a delightful companion, and his conversation was full of the charm derived from ample knowledge and marked intellectual power. No man was simpler than he in his intercourse with those whom he trusted. It was difficult when talking to him to realise the fact that you were speaking to one who had held the great office of Foreign Secretary. Instead of laying down the law upon foreign affairs he seemed anxious to elicit the opinions of other persons, and he displayed a modest simplicity of manner which was very striking. He has been described as the incarnation of common-sense, and the general public believed him to be as full of facts and as dry as a Blue Book. In reality he had a decided love of humour, and his conversation, which was illustrated by many good stories, had all the light and shade, the warmth and colour, that good talk ought to possess. He was amazingly frank in his criticisms upon men and upon current affairs.

The outer world believed him to be the most cautious and prudent of men, weighing every word before he uttered it, and never making a rash remark, whereas he was very much the reverse. I have, for example, heard him discuss the characters of European statesmen with an unreserved freedom that was startling. He was fond, too, of passing criticisms upon great political

questions that staggered one by their boldness. I think it was in 1883 that he told me that, in his opinion, there was no future for the Tory party. Conservatism as a force was played out, and the destinies of the country must henceforth be controlled by Liberals. I am trying to give a slight sketch of the man as he really was, and not as he was believed to be by the contemporary public. If he was neither so wise nor so cautious as men thought him, he was infinitely more charming and more human, and all who really knew him mourned his death as a personal loss. When I first met him he was in a state of political transition. Although he had made up his mind to sever his connection with the Conservatives, he had taken no open steps in the direction of the other camp. The first time he ever entered a Liberal club, and made a political speech in it, was when I got him to go to the Leeds Liberal Club to receive an address from the members. He is one of the most distinguished of the figures I associate with Fryston and its gifted owner.

The very last time that I dined with Lord Houghton I had an amusing experience. It was in the late autumn of 1884. Houghton had just met with a rather severe and painful accident. He had been staying at the Durdans with Lord Rosebery, and during the night had fallen out of bed, fracturing his collar-bone. His own account of the accident was that he had dreamt that Mr. Gladstone was pursuing him in a hansom cab, and in trying to escape he had tumbled off the bed. Although in great pain, he made light, according to his wont, of his injuries, and positively went down to Yorkshire the day after the accident in order to attend a meet-

ing of Quarter Sessions. It was only on his return to town, where he was staying with his sister, the Dowager Viscountess Galway, that he consulted a doctor, who found that the collar-bone was fractured, and at once ordered him complete rest. Complete rest was something for which Houghton was not by nature fitted. I went to call on him whilst he was laid up, and he immediately begged me to arrange a little dinner party for his amusement while he was invalided.

The person he was most anxious to secure as a guest was James Payn, and I promised to do what I could to get Payn to dine. But there were difficulties in the way. Payn disliked dining out at any time, and he had, as I have already mentioned, a rooted aversion to evening dress, which, he declared, killed more men than drink. Besides, when he did dine out, he wished to smoke as soon as he had finished eating, and for this reason he objected to dinner parties at which ladies were present. All this I explained to Houghton. "Not wear evening dress? Well, you and he can come in frock-coats. I shall be in a dressing-gown." "And the cigars?" I said. "Oh, well, of course he can smoke if he wishes." "And ladies?" I continued. "That's awkward," said the dear old gentleman, "for this is my sister's house. She must be here. But don't tell him, and then perhaps he'll come." My negotiations with Payn were successful, and on the appointed evening, a Sunday, he and I set forth in a hansom for Rutland Gardens. I remember that on the way Payn, who was in exceptionally high spirits, informed me of the engagement of his daughter Alice to Mr. Buckle, the young editor of the *Times*.

It was a very small party at Lady Galway's, the only other guest being Sir Frederick Pollock; but the talk was certainly as good as any I had ever listened to. When Lady Galway left the room, I reminded our host of the condition with regard to cigars, for Payn, I saw, was already impatient. Lord Houghton suggested a cigarette, which would by no means have met the views of Payn. Happily I had my cigar-case with me, and this part of the dinner treaty was carried out in its entirety. I still remember the stories of that delightful evening. They were many and striking. Both Payn and Lord Houghton were at their best, and Sir Frederick Pollock, when the opportunity occurred, gave us pleasant recollections of the past. I was only too glad to be a listener. We sat long over our cigars, and it was not until the evening was far advanced that we rejoined Lady Galway. "Now," said she, when we appeared in the drawing-room, "you have been laughing ever since I left you, but there were three distinct bursts of laughter that were louder than any others, and I insist upon being told the stories which you seemed to enjoy so much." We looked at each other in some dismay, knowing full well the difficulty of re-warming cold dishes so as to make them appetising. But Lord Houghton came to the rescue. "My dear," he said, "it is quite impossible that you should be told those stories. They were not stories for ladies." The recording angel, I am sure, blotted out our host's departure from the truth for the sake of the motive which led him to spare Payn the burden of repeating his stories.

I have dwelt upon this dinner because, though

I little knew it then, it was my last meeting with my dear and generous friend. Curiously enough, Lord Houghton's last words to me when I left him at night had reference to a lady with whom we both had a slight acquaintance. When I next saw that lady, the open grave in which Lord Houghton's coffin had just been placed yawned between us. Of that memorable dinner party in December, 1884, I, alas! am the only survivor. I corresponded with Houghton during the following spring and summer, but was unable to meet him on any of the occasions on which he asked me to do so, and whilst the summer was still at its height he died at Vichy. Like many another man, I felt that in him I had lost almost the best of my friends.

At the beginning of 1884 I visited Tangier, and spent a month in that curious place, so near to Europe in point of distance and so remote from it in all other respects. Tangier had at one time a reputation as the Alsatia of Europe and the United States. I do not know whether it still deserves this fame, but when I was there there were not a few sojourners in the place who, for reasons of their own, had abandoned civilisation in favour of a country in which law is but a term. On my way from Gibraltar to Tangier I met with an unpleasant experience. The steamer which was to convey me was a miserable rickety boat, called, if I remember aright, the *Lion d'Or*. It was not so big as a Thames penny steamer, was filthy in the extreme, and overloaded with goods which a number of Arab merchants were taking back from Europe to Morocco. There were three other European passengers besides myself, two of them being ladies. A stiff Levanter was blowing when we started, and

the trip, which should have been accomplished in three hours, took eight. I have been out in worse weather, but never in a worse vessel, and more than once in that eight hours' struggle with wind and waves my fellow-passengers and I really believed that our end had come. The captain set a sail, hoping to steady the rolling craft, and it was instantly ripped into shreds by the wind. We shipped heavy seas, and were undoubtedly very near foundering.

Most fortunately, I and the other Englishman on board, a young artist who is now a full-fledged R.A., had taken the precaution to provide ourselves with food, and it was well that the provision was a liberal one, for the two poor ladies, one of whom was a young invalid, had not so much as a biscuit between them. Of course we shared our rations, and were thus saved from hunger during our day of peril. It was dark when we entered Tangier Bay, but all round us was a sea of foaming breakers. A huge flat-bottomed barge was with great difficulty brought out to the side of the steamer, and we were bidden to jump into it at once. At the risk of broken limbs or necks, we succeeded in reaching it, and then, to my dismay, I saw the steamer, with all my baggage on board, moving off, the captain having found that it was too dangerous to remain at anchor in the bay. When we were half-way to the shore the barge suddenly filled with water and sank beneath us, fortunately in so shallow a sea that there was no danger of drowning. My walking-stick, which was a very necessary adjunct, as I still suffered from my accident on Marston Moor, was washed out of my hands, but brawny Arabs

seized me and my fellow-passengers, and we were borne safely through the surf to the beach, where we arrived, dazed, breathless, and drenched to the skin.

My travelling experiences in Tunis and Turkey had prepared me for the rush which was made upon us by all the loafers of the place, shrieking in Arabic, and eagerly claiming us as their spoil. But the ladies had never been out of England before, and were naturally terrified by the wild scene, following as it did upon their narrow escape from drowning. They were going to an hotel in the town, and I escorted them to it. Then I set out on my walk to Bruzeaud's Hotel, beyond the city gates and the Soko. I was in a sorry plight when I arrived there, but nothing could exceed the kindness of my reception, not only by the host, but by the Englishmen in the house. They placed their wardrobes at my disposal, and did everything they could to make me comfortable. My lost luggage did not turn up for nearly a week, but happily I had my money and my letters of introduction in my pocket. On the morning after my arrival I called upon the ladies who had shared my experiences on the previous day, and found, happily, that they had not suffered from the shock. I never saw them again ; but ten years afterwards, when I was sitting in my room in London, a gentleman who had called upon business was brought to see me. To my great surprise he burst into tears as he took my hand. When he had recovered his composure he explained that he was the father of the younger of the two ladies, and he thanked me, in what I could not but think unnecessarily warm terms, for the trifling service I had rendered to his

daughter. His emotion was explained by the fact that she had but recently died.

Among the company at Bruzeaud's Hotel there was a certain Captain W., a retired naval officer, who was something of a character. He had lived long in Morocco, had the highest opinion of its enormous natural wealth, and was longing for the day when England, or some other European Power, would seize and develop it. He had many original theories. He believed, for example, that Gibraltar was a source of weakness rather than of strength to the British Empire, and he had written a pamphlet in support of a proposal that we should exchange it with Spain for Ceuta. I must confess that his idea seemed to me to be a sound one. But Gibraltar looks so grand, and makes so strong an appeal to our national pride, that no English Minister would dare to talk of surrendering it, no matter what he might be offered in exchange. All the same, I do not think that Captain W. was altogether wrong when he spoke of the Rock as a "magnificent impostor."

One day there came to our hotel a typical representative of "Padgett, M.P." He was a member of the House of Commons who, having a couple of days to spare at Gibraltar, had run across the Straits to learn all about Morocco in the space of four-and-twenty hours. In the smoking-room after dinner he aired his opinions with all the confidence begotten of his Parliamentary dignity. He denounced the French, who knew nothing, he declared, about colonisation, and whose government of Algeria was a disgraceful failure. He lauded the noble character of the Arabs, and declared that Morocco needed no improvement,

and, consequently, called for no interference on the part of any European Power. Captain W., who had very strong opinions as to the corruption of the Moorish Government, listened for some time in silence to opinions which were eminently distasteful to him. But at last his patience gave way, and he addressed the astonished M.P. in the following words: "You think you know everything about Morocco, sir, although you only landed on its soil this morning. There is one thing, however, that you evidently don't know, and that is, that if I chose to spend a couple of dollars I could have your throat cut before to-morrow morning; and you've talked such nonsense, sir, that I don't know whether that wouldn't be the best thing for me to do." I never saw a Padgett, M.P., collapse more completely than did this unfortunate specimen of the race under a retort which, however wanting in urbanity, was not without very considerable provocation.

In the early summer of 1885 I ventured, for the first time during my editorship at Leeds, to take a holiday whilst Parliament was sitting. It had always previously been my rule never to leave my post during the session of Parliament, but in 1885 everything seemed to be in a state of profound calm, so far as the political world was concerned. General Gordon was dead, but the Ministry had survived his loss. It had even survived the ignominious collapse of the attempt to "break the power of the Mahdi at Khartoum" which it had professed to make. One knew that bitter intrigues were in progress behind the scenes. But now that Mr. Forster was off the scene Mr. Chamberlain seemed bent upon trying conclusions with Mr. Glad-

stone himself, and was preaching those doctrines of an extreme and Socialistic Radicalism which the Conservatives frankly denounced as being based on the policy of Jack Cade. But time was needed for the successful development of the new political movement, and meanwhile public affairs seemed to be running in a very humdrum course. I thought it, in consequence, a favourable opportunity for carrying out a long-cherished intention of visiting the Land of the Midnight Sun. Accordingly, at the beginning of June I went over to Bergen in a Wilson steamer from Hull. The vessel was crowded with salmon-fishers and their wives, going to Norway for the summer fishing. I was much amused by the extreme clannishness of these persons. They absolutely refused to exchange a word with anybody who was not going to Norway for purposes of sport. Those of us who, like myself, were going there either for health or to see the country were regarded by the salmon-fishing people as intruders, whose presence on the scene was to be actively and rudely resented. I have travelled much in my time, and have had only too many opportunities of observing the ridiculous and offensive behaviour of the English snob when he finds himself in foreign parts; but I do not think that I ever saw snobbish vulgarity carried further than it was by the salmon-fishers on this Wilson steamer in the summer of 1885.

For my part, I had no greater desire for their company than they had for mine, and when I reached Bergen, I speedily transhipped myself to a native cargo-boat that was announced as being about to start for the first visit of the season to the North Cape. The accommodation

on board the vessel, though somewhat homely, was comfortable. I had a good cabin, and soon made friends with the officers. No other Englishman was on board. We steamed slowly up the coast as far as Trondhjem, and I had ample opportunities of admiring the fine scenery, as our vessel touched at almost every small port upon the way. After resting a day at Trondhjem, we resumed our journey for the North Cape. The passengers were chiefly Norwegians, most of whom were bound for the Lofoten Islands, where the great annual fair was about to be held. In the saloon my companions from Trondhjem were two young Frenchmen, bent, like myself, upon visiting the North Cape, and an Austrian, attached to the Court at Vienna, who, for some inscrutable reason, was fired with the same ambition. We made a very cheery company, and I was able to cast off all editorial cares in the society of these people, to whom English politics were of no account. The weather, after leaving Trondhjem, was for some days positively frightful. It was the month of June, but it rained incessantly, except when it snowed. It was bitterly cold, and heavy mists prevented our seeing anything.

The Austrian and I bore the discomforts of the situation as philosophically as we could. We smoked always, and we read and played bezique alternately, but our mercurial French friends were less happy, and on the third day of this detestable weather, on entering the little smoking-room on deck, I discovered them both sitting in tears, and bewailing the fact that they were not at home with their mothers. I laughed so much at their distress that a coolness sprang up between us which lasted for several days.

Once, indeed, as I find noted in my memorandum-book, the young Frenchmen revived. It was at one of the stations at which we called. We saw a large group of people, including several young women, gathered in front of a building that looked half-church, half-schoolhouse. The Parisians insisted that they had assembled in our honour ; for, as a matter of fact, they looked upon themselves as being engaged in a desperate and most heroic enterprise. Accordingly, as we approached the wharf, they brought out their pocket handkerchiefs, and, waving them wildly, uttered loud shouts of greeting. To their great chagrin, not the slightest notice was taken of them. They redoubled their efforts to attract attention, but neither man nor woman moved a head. Then one of the officers came along, and drily informed the Frenchmen that the object of their demonstrations was a funeral party !

I had many other amusing experiences during this little trip, and feel strongly tempted to inflict upon my readers some extracts from the diary which I kept during the voyage. But nowadays everybody has been to the North Cape, and we have all seen the midnight sun. I think I saw it, and the wonderful scenery of the Lofoten Islands, in my little Norwegian cargo-boat, under far more favourable auspices than my successors who have travelled in great tourist steamers, surrounded by all the luxuries that are now supplied to the passengers on the large Atlantic and Mediterranean liners. Certainly, one saw something of the people, as well as of the country, when travelling in this modest fashion ; and I still have the most pleasant recollection of these friendly Norwegians and of the

glorious fiords and mountains of the Far North. But that which entitles this trip of mine to a special place in these reminiscences of a journalist is the fact that it cut me off from all connection with affairs in England at the very moment when those affairs became unexpectedly interesting.

I had left Hull on the 2nd of June, and after parting from my chance companions of the *Eldorado*, had not seen a single Englishman, or heard a scrap of English news, until I found myself at Tromsoe, within the Arctic circle, on June 17th. The captain of my vessel, knowing that I wanted to hear what was going on at home, drew my attention to the fact that a steam collier from Leith had just arrived in Tromsoe Harbour, and suggested that I should go on board and get the latest newspapers. Accordingly, I went off in one of the ship's boats to the grimy collier. It was eleven p.m., but the sun was shining brilliantly. For some time I hailed the vessel in vain, but at last a black-faced man who was manifestly one of the officers thrust his head through a port and asked what I wanted. I told him that I had come to see if he had any newspapers from home. "I will go and see," he said, in a strong Glasgow dialect, and presently he returned with a copy of the *Glasgow Mail* of June 3rd, and threw it down to me. I was disappointed that he had nothing of a later date, and after thanking him for his kindness was returning to my own steamer, when a sudden thought occurred to me, and I said, "Have you heard any news later than this?" holding up the newspaper. He considered for a moment, then shook his head reflectively, and said, "Na, I've heard naething later."

So again I started on my way to the ship. I had not gone more than a yard or two when I heard him calling to me loudly. Once more I put back. "I forgot to tell ye that they've kicked oot that blasted auld deevil, Gladstone." "What!" I exclaimed, in incredulous horror. "Kicked out Mr. Gladstone! What do you mean?" "I mean that they've kicked him oot of office, and a d—d good job, too."

I fairly gasped for breath as I heard the astonishing news. Here was I, the editor of an English daily newspaper, away up in the Arctic circle, separated by days of travel from newspapers or means of getting news, and I suddenly heard this startling piece of intelligence. I could not credit it, and eagerly asked for further particulars. But the old tar could tell me nothing more. He could only persist in affirming and reaffirming his conviction that Mr. Gladstone's loss of office was the best thing that could have happened to the country. And this was the end of the great Ministry of 1880, for the formation of which I had worked so hard, and which I had so constantly and ardently supported with my pen! I went back to the *Kong Halfdan* much excited, and rushing to the captain told him that I must go back to England at once. He heard my news and sympathised with my dilemma, but assured me that the earliest mode of returning to Trondhjem would be by sticking to his ship. I went ashore, and made further inquiries, only to have the captain's statement confirmed; so, willy-nilly, I had to go on to the North Cape, bitterly conscious of the fact that I ought to have been at my post at Leeds. But a man in a hurry is always the victim

of circumstances, and there was nothing for it but to possess my soul in patience. How eagerly I looked for further news! It was not, however, until several days later that, on returning to Tromsoe, I found a mail-steamer going north, and saw an unmistakable Englishman on the deck, whom I immediately accosted with a request for information. All he could tell me was that Mr. Gladstone had resigned on the 12th of June, and that Lord Salisbury on the next day had been hastily summoned by the Queen to Balmoral and had accepted office. From Trondhjem I made hot haste by rail to Christiania, and taking the first steamer for Hull, which to me seemed to make haste slowly, returned to my own country to face the unexpected fact that a great political revolution had suddenly occurred, and that the Tories were once more in power.

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